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HOURS OF DEVOTION,

FOR THE

PROMOTION

OF

TRUE CHRISTIANITY AND FAMILY WORSHIP.

TRANSLATED

FROM THE ORIGINAL GERMAN,

BY THE

REV. E. I. BURROW, D.D. F.R.S. & F.L.S.

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ADVERTISEMENT

BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

THE great popularity which has for some years attended a work, translated from the German, and entitled “*Reflections on the Works of God*,” &c. is a sufficient proof, that although the class of books to which it belongs be in this country less abundant, perhaps, than any other, the public mind is by no means indisposed to such contemplations as it is calculated to promote. Having this evidence before him, and being impressed with a deep conviction of the value of all sound and judicious aids to devotional

¹ “Betrachtungen über die Werke Gottes im Reiche der Natur und der Vorsehung, auf alle Tage des Jahres,” by C. C. Sturm.

reflection, the translator of the following sheets feels persuaded that he performs an acceptable service in offering them to English readers. The "Hours of Devotion" are not very dissimilar from Sturm's "Reflections,"—but the subjects of them are of a higher, and still more important rank; and their composition is certainly not inferior. The origin and nature—"the aim and use"—of the work, however, are best learnt from the author's own account of it in his "Preface;" but of the author himself (or authors—for the plurality may fairly be inferred from the difference of style which is observable) it may not be uninteresting to mention, that he is yet unknown, or at least unavowed. This is the more remarkable, inasmuch as a recent advertisement in a German literary Gazette announces the thirteenth edition of the work,—each edition, no doubt, consisting of at least ten thousand copies:—a testimony in its favour sufficiently flattering and substantial, it might be supposed, to allure the writer from his concealment.

To the splendid tribute of applause which has been awarded to this anonymous work

upon the continent, the present translator desires to add his humble but unfeigned acknowledgment of its worth. If the reader derive as much pleasure and edification from it as the editor has derived, he will not only esteem highly the extensive and critical knowledge of the human mind, and the truly Christian spirit, which are displayed throughout it, but he will experience no inconsiderable satisfaction in reflecting, that among a people to whom Englishmen are so nearly allied by blood, by politics, and by religion, there should be found so large a number of readers and enthusiastic admirers of such a publication ;—he will earnestly wish and pray, that, for the honour of God and the spiritual benefit of man, there may exist among his own countrymen, an equal willingness to accept so excellent a guide in devotional exercises of the heart—in rendering the common concerns of life subservient to the health of the soul, and its preparation for a more perfect state of existence.

With regard to the translation—it has been made as literal as the different idioms of the two languages would permit ; and, indeed, in

some instances, the construction of the English has been modelled after the peculiar character of the German—for the sake of retaining something of its natural expressiveness and force. This will be more readily excused than the opposite fault, especially by those who are acquainted with the powerful and noble qualities of the language of a Luther and a Klopstock.

It is necessary, in justice to the author, to state, that in a few cases—*a very few*—particular expressions and even whole passages have been accommodated to the view which the translator has taken of the subject, rather than that which is obviously intended to be given by the author. This has been done for two reasons: in the first place, it would not have been becoming in a clergyman of the Church of England to promulgate any opinions on important points, inconsistent with those which are entertained by himself and the majority of his Church:—and secondly, it seemed that such an alteration, wherever it was requisite, would render the work less liable to exception, and better adapted to the general use of English fami-

lies. At the same time, the translator wishes it to be understood, that he does not unreservedly agree to every position of his author which has been allowed to remain in the following pages :—but he has not thought himself at liberty to exclude any sentiments of so pious and instructive a writer, on comparatively indifferent questions, and in matters of speculation, merely because they did not, in all respects, concur with his own.

The verses, which in the original are prefixed to the greatest number of the chapters, have been entirely omitted, as not being at all essential to the argument or illustration, and as rather weakening than improving the effect of the exordium—which in many instances is very striking and satisfactory.

The papers themselves have been taken, not in the order of the work, but five out of each of the eight parts, or years ; for the purpose of presenting a better specimen of the whole, and of exhibiting a greater variety of subjects.

Should the sample now offered be received with only a small portion of the approbation and zeal with which the original has been

circulated, the translator is prepared to follow up the present volume with another series of papers, selected in the same manner, and not less deserving of attention.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

WHEN GOD, in the day of fearful visitation and calamity, amidst the storms of war for many years, spake to the people of the earth, and His voice sounded even more mightily than it did of old in the thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai: "*Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation:*" (EXODUS xix. 6.)—then the author of this work felt himself seized with a holy zeal, and he wrote it to awaken devotion, to raise the dejected, to instruct the erring. It appeared, at that time, as a weekly sheet, successively for eight years (from 1809 to 1816 inclusive). After he had completed his labour, new editions of the weekly papers were prepared,—notwithstanding a work in such a form was inconvenient for the reader, and contained many things, which under a change of circumstances were scarcely intelligible or fit for the occasion.

This has induced him to give to the publication a more suitable form and arrangement, as well to facilitate the purchase of it to many families and individuals, as to render the whole more useful to the different ranks in society. He collected, therefore, out of the whole eight years' papers, those dispersed reflections which might be edifying in general to Christian families—those, especially, which might be profitable to the young man and young woman in their respective

situations,—or to the pious observer of nature,—or to the sufferer who directed his views towards eternity;—or lastly, to those who desired to elevate and sanctify their minds by reflection on the character and progress of the Religion of Jesus Christ. He left out repetitions, which from the mode in which the work at first appeared, had necessarily occurred:—he omitted allusions to the period and circumstances in which the weekly sheets were published; and added much, where there appeared to be a deficiency.

Thus was compiled the present *Book of Devotion, for the use of a Christian household*. It was intentionally so arranged, that the reflections should follow one another in great variety, and not in the strict order and succession of a compendium of Christian duties. Even this change is refreshing to the mind of the reader; and it is often the unexpected observation which acts most powerfully upon him—especially when the subject is more or less in harmony with the disposition of his soul.

It may happen, indeed, that the particular treatise which you, my Christian reader, take in hand to study for your edification, or your comfort, may not always comprehend what is adapted to your inclination at the moment. But even in this case, it can be only a gain to you,—and no loss. It is always profitable, if our soul be suddenly led to reflection on any important thing, on which, just at the moment, it thought the least. Perhaps it is an object which had been long forgotten and neglected—so much the more useful will be to us the recollection of it. Perhaps, when our mind is most deeply afflicted by any misfortune, it is excited to the contemplation of the Greatness and Majesty of God:—herein will it find the fullest consolation. Perhaps, when we

have given way, in agreeable circumstances, to happiness unbounded, our attention may be called to the instability of all earthly things. When can we better learn to enjoy pleasure with moderation?

It is not the words which these contemplations present to you, my Christian reader, but the way and manner in which you read them, in the different situations of your life,—and what you think and feel in consequence,—that can promote your salutary knowledge, and the happiness of your life.

In a Christian family JESUS CHRIST should be esteemed as the first and best Friend. His word, His counsel, should guide our spirit in the affairs of daily life. How lovely is it to dwell in a house where thoughts of God and divine things begin and end the work of every day! How beautiful is the sight of a family, in which the venerable father, the pious mother, surrounded by their children, dependents, and faithful servants, teach and expound the word of God! How much good—how much blessing is there produced—how much sinfulness and unholiness is there suppressed, privately and without any external observation.

It is not meant to be said, that we should assemble together every day at home, at a solemn hour of devotion. The most delightful task becomes by repetition tiring and common; the most impressive loses its force by custom. But you may always find, in the course of the week, at least one hour when you can obtain possession of yourself in solitude. Let this be the hour of your *private* devotion—then engage in earnest self-examination:—then take these contemplations, designed for your assistance, or some other book conducive to religion—and by its means prepare yourself for communing with your God—for making proof of your

pure or impure inclinations—for choosing the future principles on which you will have to act.

It is quite possible, that we may not be at all times equally fit to devote ourselves to the serious affairs of religion. You have pleasant and unpleasant accidents in your family, which disturb you; you are thinking of different undertakings and projects, which at present occupy your whole mind; you have certain works before you, which take up your time, and may likewise weary you, or require your undivided attention.

Yet, my dear friend, do not deceive yourself. It is true the inclination to employ yourself in religious affairs may be wanting. But should your inclinations rule you, or should you be the lord of them? You have perhaps no inclination to speak to a king, or a prince, or any other of your magistrates. But if he were to stand before you, would you not appear in his presence with your whole mind, and with all respect? God—the Almighty—stands before you every minute of your existence:—Eternity impends over you every moment that you think and will! Cannot you do that in His presence which you can do every day before all your earthly superiors? No;—we must not delay those sublime employments, if we would not at last find pleasure in the most disgraceful. The thought of God, and then—that you should be worthy of Him—must be to you as a habit—as a matter of perpetual necessity:—otherwise you will not win the palm of inward perfectness. Religion and virtue must become as indispensable to your soul, as food and drink are to your body:—Otherwise your Christianity is hypocrisy—the prayer by which you think to consecrate yourself to God, mere outward ceremonial.

Wherefore by no means leave to chance, or to opportunity, or to your particular inclination, the choice of the hours in which, either alone, or with your relatives, you are to devote yourself to divine contemplation. These hours may else occur seldomer than is beneficial to your heart. You go at an appointed time to your domestic and official business, without asking yourself whether you have great pleasure in your work. If you can do this for your bread, for your earthly support, why will you less serve the more noble part of you, your immortal spirit? Do not delay the hours of holy meditation to the time when you know of nothing better to do. Reflection on God, eternity, and the destination of the soul, is not calculated merely to shorten tedious moments, or to entertain us in an idle hour.

Choose the time, when, being free from other business, you can be given up to yourself—to yourself either in solitude, or surrounded by your dependents and children assembled for the same purpose. Fix this hour invariably, if it be possible, amidst your other business; for custom has great power over the mind, and much facilitates our duty. Most admirably is Sunday—the universally sacred Sabbath of the Christian world—appropriated to this purpose. It is dedicated to quiet, devotion, and serious reflection. We willingly look back from it on the daily employment of the preceding week with a scrutinizing eye—and make new determinations and arrangements for the ensuing one. Then it is that the soul looks up, even involuntarily, to the wise Ruler of our fate—the great Disposer of our fortune. Neglect not the good purpose of this day; omit not to allow your mind one hour of devotion. For perhaps even in

this hour a truth may be presented to your soul, which may unexpectedly have the most important influence on your welfare in the week.

But with regard to what you read or hear read:—accustom yourself never to think of other things at the same time; but turn your whole thoughts upon yourself. Compare strictly and honestly what is there said, with the state in which you find yourself, or with your mode of thinking and way of acting. Then will you soon perceive what progress you have already made, and how much is yet wanting to you, in order to be a worthy disciple of Jesus Christ, a deserving child of God,—to live happy, and to die content.

But those passages which particularly touch you, which, as it were, appear to stand there especially for your advantage—those remark above all others. They are the words to be selected for the benefit of your heart. Make the subject of them a lasting treasure in your mind; a rule for all the future week, and if possible, your whole life.

Yet memory, indeed, is often faithless. We do not always remember what is good, when it is most necessary to us. Business and vexations, cares and pleasures, in the course of the week, drive out the good thoughts of Sunday—the holy resolution which is formed in the bosom of solitude and meditation. Therefore assist yourself. Take those select passages, which particularly strike or move you, once every day in your hand—at the hour when you leave your couch, and before you go to your day's work. Such a thought renewed in you becomes, as it were, the guardian angel of your soul, and will remind it of its own worth, on occasions when it might otherwise forget it—will keep you

from transgressions and injurious steps—will give you an elevation and power, which may at length bring you to the habit of virtue, and to a permanent nobleness of soul.

Then whence comes it that we can hear and read so much that is excellent—that we often, in pious moments, can make such holy resolutions, and then after some days or weeks again become as bad and feeble, as if all that is past had never happened? We say, indeed, that we are wanting in power; or, that man remains always sinful; or, that grace is not yet effectual in us:—and thus we console ourselves for our own unworthiness, which we then again repent of before God;—we console ourselves for transgressions for which we have often heavily to atone;—or we despair of the possibility of becoming as good as we could wish. No; our negligence and the unfruitfulness of our good resolutions often spring from the weakness of our memory—from this cause, that after a certain time we cannot recall a sufficiently vivid image of the good which we have read, heard, or intended. Hence the marking of especially important passages, and the frequent recollection and re-perusal of them, contribute to the continuing in laudable determinations, and to a great and holy life.

If you wish that your chamber should be converted into a temple of God, and your household into an assembly of upright worshippers; if you wish that domestic peace and domestic love should dwell within it, and that the word of Christ should be fulfilled, which He spake: “*When two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;*”—then lay not aside what you have read with lifeless praise, or with the exclamation: “*This was a fine reflection!*”—when the power of the Divine Word

has struck your heart. No ; reflect afterwards upon the feelings which it has awakened in you, and make those feelings stronger ; or if your young children be with you, ask them about what they have heard read ; explain to them simply, without any ornament of language, that which, perhaps, has not been comprehended by them. Let them learn by heart an occasional passage which is adapted to their minds ; not for the sake of making a duty of that which through frequent repetition must at length become ordinary and indifferent ; but because it is always advantageous to young people, if they imprint a good precept on their memory. Often—when their heart slumbers in the moment of approaching error—their memory is roused, and awakes their heart, and saves it !

So farewell, my readers, my dear friends ! May God be with you ! Perhaps it belongs to the blessedness of that future existence which the grace of God has promised us, distinctly to look upon and perceive the past—what have been the consequences and effects of the good which we delighted to do. Perhaps I shall there recognize those for whose sake I have not lived in vain. Perhaps I shall then perceive you, ye troubled and weary ones, to whom, in an hour of grief, refreshment and consolation have come from God through my words. Perhaps I shall then recognize you, ye dear ones, who when ye wavered between sin and virtue, were carried through your moments of danger, by the direction of Eternal Providence, and found in these reflections a new inducement to forget the world with its pleasures, and to keep the holy will of God. Perhaps I shall then know those for whom I have been an instrument of the Lord, to teach them the best alternative in doubt, so

that they have returned to the right way of life, and have been carried back to the Eternal Father.

Farewell, my brethren! In God we are, and remain united;—in God we shall meet again.

And Thou, O my God, my Father, bless them with Thy mercy! Be with them, as long as they wander upon earth. Fill them with the power of Thy Holy Spirit! Draw them to Thyself by the Revelation of Thine Eternal Son! Be their consolation—be their Life!

And has that which I have striven to do for the spreading of Thy holy Empire been deficient and imperfect? Alas! how willingly would I have performed it better! How abundant was my longing to express in a worthy manner what filled my whole heart with pious fervour! But Thou, before whom nothing is great,—nothing is little; who from nonentity didst call the worlds; and doest the most marvellous works with the smallest means; Thou who art mighty in weakness—Thou canst and wiltst be mighty with many a soul through that which I have done after my possibility! Mine was the will therein—for Thou gavest me freedom of will—but the deed is Thine! I have done nothing. The most certain blessing of my endeavour was on myself,—it was my own amendment, my own exercise of love towards Thee, my own strengthening in the contest against sin.

And the beloved far and near, for whom Thou hast chosen me to be an expounder of Thy holy will—oh! pray once more—bless them! Father, their and my Father, bless them! Sanctify them through Thy truth, THY WORD IS TRUTH.—Amen.

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Hours of Devotion.

I.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW YEAR.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 4—7.

“ Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

THERE is something unusually solemn in the beginning of each NEW YEAR. It is, as it were, the festival which we dedicate to our silent hopes, our most secret wishes. Here the joyous early ringing of the bells announces the commencement of the period ; there clarions, and trumpets, and sacred songs greet the first morning of the year. The sprightly host of youths, rejoicing, hail the dawn ; friends and acquaintance, in mutual love, wish each other happiness. Dutiful children pray more

devoutly for the health of their parents,—the suffering, for their benefactors,—the people, in the temple, for their rulers.

To all the boundary between two years is most important ; to the king upon his throne, as well as to the beggar under his roof of straw ; to the industrious father of a family amidst his workmen, as well as to the anxious mother beside her children ; to the grey-headed veteran in his easy chair, as well as to the youngster, who, full of buoyant expectation, longs to launch forth into a stormy world.

Our past life appears, behind us, like a lengthened dream : the remainder of our days, before us, hangs like an impenetrable cloud over an unseen land. More fearful cares torment the melancholy man : brighter hopes swarm round the cheerful one. Each one directs his view towards the lot which the ensuing days and months shall probably bring forth. Each one would guess something of his own destiny, which yet lies hidden in a dark futurity—as the corn at present in the wintry, closed-up lap of the earth, continues still to germinate.

With uncertain expectation and fresh solicitude, each one returns to his occupations, and draws out his designs and plans. The Christian also resumes his course. Fear and hope play around *him* also. But with what disposition does he set forward, at

the beginning of the new year, to meet the obscure future, and his unknown fate ?

He, for a while, seeks solitude ; in which his soul may obtain self-possession. He lifts up his spirit to his Almighty Father, and contemplates the infinite love of God. His mouth gives utterance to the gratitude of his heart ; he says : ‘ *I am not worthy of all the mercy, love, and faithfulness which Thou hast shewn me.* For, that I am, and, what I have, must be ascribed to Thee ! Thou hast preserved me through a thousand dangers, which I did not even know. Thou wast present when my need and difficulties were the greatest. Thou didst watch over me and my family when we erred. Whatever befell me in past days, I am sensible it happened for my advantage : and what I as yet do not understand, that it also was for the best, I shall learn in the sequel to comprehend. For the inviolable order in which Thou rulest the world is wise and wonderful, and conducive to that higher state of blessedness which Thou hast been pleased to appoint to man. Yes ; I also belong to this sacred system, which is eternal and indestructible as Thyself ; I also am accounted by Thee a member of it. And even a lamentable fate, although I have not brought it on myself by any imprudent act,—a fate which I could not avoid—a fate under which my heart has bled, is to be esteemed a part of Thy

perpetual government of the world. And whatever Thou dost, is well done !'

O God, my God, Thou who art full of inexhaustible mercy ! O Father, my Father, who art full of unutterable goodness, I beseech Thee never to forsake me ! Forsake not either me or my beloved family. Forsake us not even when we shall do wrong. Thy children err : with tears they seek again Thy mercy.

Yes, O Lord, my God, *hitherto Thou hast helped me ; Thou wilt sustain me still.* Behold how full of confidence I lift up mine eyes unto Thee. As a feeble child rests itself with love and firm dependance on the father's or the mother's hand, so rest I myself on Thee. I will follow the precepts of Thy holy Son—the doctrine of my Redeemer Jesus Christ ; for it is Thy word which He has transmitted to us : and then with quiet submission will I await the destiny which Thou hast appointed to me and mine, in the ensuing year.

I put my whole trust in Thee ; and therefore venture not to make any particular petition. Thou only knowest what is salutary for me and mine ; and Thou wilt give, and cause to happen, whatever may be most beneficial to us.

Certainly, O my God, O Thou omniscient Being, many a fervent, cordial wish agitates my heart ; many a still, small wish, which I would scarcely

disclose to any one, lest I should be misinterpreted ; many a wish, which I would loudly, and with tears proclaim. Ah ! that *one* might be fulfilled ! Thou knowest it ; I dare not name it to Thee ; but it were supreme felicity.

No ! No ! what have I said ? Am I then wiser than Eternal Wisdom ? Can I foresee what will be my source of happiness, when I cannot even tell what may happen on the following day ? No ; Thou allwise, most loving Father, I express my wishes like an ignorant child. But Thou wilt permit only those to be eventually fulfilled, which Thou knowest will be truly advantageous to me. Into Thy faithful, paternal hand I resign myself and all belonging to me, all that are dear and precious to me. We appertain to Thee. Thou alone, Thou art our God ! Well, then, my heart, cast far away all fruitless cares and visionary hopes ; and await with calm trust the gifts of that benignant Providence who watches over thee, and the objects of thy love.

Fear not too much for the future, and hope not too much from it. Both may be equally injurious, and have too great and destructive an influence on the resolutions and plans you form.

Hope not too much ! This it is which leads a man into unpleasant situations : that being too full of confidence, he gives himself up entirely to his

flattering expectations; that he doubts not of any thing—of this or that anticipated good; that he supposes whatever he desires must surely come to pass, because, perhaps, some probability of it may exist. He orders his whole conduct, too hastily, with a view to this. He frames all his projects with reference to this; and suffers himself, when blinded by his hopes, to be misled into foolish undertakings. What the heart wishes, that it naturally hopes. It remembers no longer how often it has been deceived in its expectations.

Hope not too much! For it will put you out of humour, and grievously depress your spirits, if your hopes are not accomplished. You prepare for yourself many bitter moments, which you might have readily avoided. Disappointed hopes always leave a smart behind, which may make us unjust to a brother, or ungrateful to Divine Providence. And whom should we then accuse but ourselves, who indulged in silly reveries, and built unsubstantial castles in the air?

Hope not too much! For this renders you unprepared to meet misfortunes, which may yet possibly befall you. Whoever coaxes his soul with too brilliant promises, relaxes its needful vigour; he spoils it by too much tenderness, and makes it unfit to endure the storm which may suddenly break in on all sides. The wise man, that is to

say, the CHRISTIAN, prepared for all events, and armed with tranquillity and submission, goes forward into the dark region of futurity, like the soldier towards an unconquered enemy. Directing his eyes to heaven, he receives his lot, whether it be of good or evil, from the hand of the eternal Ruler of the universe, with pious gratitude. Whether the next month weave for him a crown of unexpected joys, or point out to him a coffin, in which a beloved friend shall lie ; he awaits either with Christian-like composure.

Hope only for so much of happiness as you may obtain through an upright, virtuous course. Such hope will seldom fail. The virtues which you exercise will ever bring with them their own joys even in the present world. The casting away of your evil habits and prevailing faults, will reunite you to those who now even despise or hate you : the good qualities which you possess,—your friendly disposition,—your disinterested desire to be serviceable to others,—your endeavours always to speak as well as possible of every man,—your zeal in all matters entrusted to you,—your abstinence from all disreputable concerns, will create esteem and love in the minds of those who as yet look on you with indifference. For wherein at last consists the durable happiness of man ? Even in this : that a man should be at peace with himself,

be satisfied with his own conduct, and acquire the esteem and friendship of the good. Are you not happy? what prevents your being so? Why will you not cast off many failings of which you well know yourself to be guilty; and by which you repel others from you, and deprive yourself of tranquillity of mind—of the peace of God. Why, then, do you hope for happiness from others, when you can frame it better and more durably with your own hands? It would, perhaps, be difficult for you to effect a change in this or that particular—you have not the courage to begin. Now, do not complain any longer—you have not the courage to be happy.

Hope only for so much of reputation and prosperity as you can earn by your own diligence and labour. In all circumstances, count only on yourself and God's blessing; not on the assistance of other men; not on a lucky chance; not on a blind fortune which may heap riches on you, as an unexpected inheritance, or a prize in the lottery. The more a man can rely on himself, and the less dependant he is on other men, and on their favour, so much the greater will he be, so much the more free, so much the more honoured, and so much the more capable of doing good. Why, then, do you so earnestly hope for a high reputation in society, or for the acquisition of dazzling

riches? Is it not for the sake of flattering your vanity? How! shall God work wonders to gratify your secret pride; and for such a purpose order the destinies of the world? He who cannot be happy and contented with that which is to be acquired by his own diligence and cheerful labour, is, in truth, deserving of no greater gifts of fortune.

Hope only for so much enjoyment in the world, as by your own prudence you can prepare for yourself. I always refer you to yourself. You shall be the author of your own happiness: for that purpose, God has furnished you with reason and understanding. Prudently avoid all hazardous undertakings; arrange your household with prudence; choose your friends with prudence; use every opportunity of improving your circumstances with zeal and prudence; behave yourself with prudence towards men of other ways of thinking, and other ranks: so will you certainly spare yourself innumerable wretched hours, and form for yourself, in the sphere of life in which you have been placed, a peaceful paradise, which will afford you far more delight than all your visionary hopes.

Consider time as a vacant field, in which neither happiness nor unhappiness springs of itself. You must first till and cultivate it with your own hand. Whatever you sow in this field, that shall you also

reap. In this field pray ; in this field labour ; and a heavenly blessing shall recompense your pains.

If, then, unhopèd-for success attend you, a pleasure which you do not expect ; well—so much the more agreeably will it surprise you, so much the more happy will it render you. Ah ! how rich is God ; how inexhaustible is His goodness ! Be assured He will send you, in the ensuing year, without your expecting or asking for it, much unforeseen enjoyment.

Fear not too much ! The fear of future evil is itself the greatest evil. You suffer more even now from fear, than from the affliction when it has once arrived. You poison your health with it, and blight many a tender joy which has but just bloomed forth. Fear is often nothing but a bad habit. Some men like to be constantly complaining ; and every thing excites their apprehensions. They torment themselves, and insantly destroy the substantial pleasures which are within their grasp.

Fear not too much ; for fear makes you spiritless ! and you are easily led by its influence into erroneous conduct. Reckon not then your anxieties and fears as the effects of your prudence : for prudence is of a calm spirit ; it freely enjoys the present cheerful moment ; it represses predominant fear with the hope of better things ; and

shows itself at last, when the dreaded hour of suffering comes, capable of diminishing the greatest evils by self-possession, and considerate conduct. Tranquilly floats the sailor on the bosom of the ocean, and rejoices in the serene sunshine and favourable winds. Shall he fear storms, or anticipate a shipwreck, while all goes well? But the heavens are now overcast; a raging tempest agitates the waves, shivers his sail, and threatens dire destruction. Fear and pusillanimity would only accelerate his ruin. But trusting stedfastly in that God who accompanies him over the solitary sea, even in the storm, the seaman collects his utmost strength, hastens where help is wanted; struggles with the winds and waves; and, by his dexterity, rescues himself from danger.

Fear not too much; but recollect, if you have not hitherto enjoyed great happiness, that every thing is liable to change. Are you at present in a hopeless situation? Take courage; it will not continue, surely, as it is. Do you not already know from experience, how constant is the vicissitude of things! Is it now dark around you? be assured it will become clearer after a few days. Here below misfortune has no long endurance—as little as good fortune. Why should we despair when the sun sets? Does not the day again smile upon us, when the night is past? Consider the whole

extent of your actual ill condition and adversity ; and ask yourself if all be lost. No ! have you lost all ? You have not lost your God ! Why then should you despair ? (Heb. xiii. 5, 6.)

Fear not too much : since God is about your path throughout futurity. And, if all your hopes, all the joys of life should fail you, still are you not altogether destitute ; for the inexhaustible source of all happiness, of all good gifts—the *goodness of God*, has not yet retreated from the world. Has the hand of death robbed you of a beloved individual—the darling of your soul—a male or female friend ; why should your heart continue to bleed in vain over the grave of the deceased object of your affection ? Traveller to eternity ! you walk forward, in God's hand, towards the favourite you have lost on earth. Has any human injustice wronged you—have you, through the malice of savage souls, or through the desolations of war, lost much, perhaps the whole, of your property ? Take courage, notwithstanding. He who can amply recompense you rules the stars ; and by Him your tears are numbered.

Fear not too much ; and remember that the sufferings which have been your lot in former years, which deprive you of your courage and hope of better days—remember that they were a trial of your Christian stedfastness, a trial and a guide for

your behaviour afterwards. You are born for another world, not for this transitory dream of life. It is only through virtue well matured—through wisdom severely proved—through true magnanimity and spiritual excellence, that you will become at some future time the worthy inhabitant of a better world. For this reason do evils exist, that with them we may exercise, and strengthen the powers of our mind. (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.) You have suffered. Well, then, where is your strength—your exercise? What have you learnt in the school of affliction? Are you become a better man? Are you so? then tremble not in future for any further loss. You may address yourself to heaven with joyful trust, and say, “*The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.*”

Fear nothing but the evil which you have drawn down upon yourself by your offences. Each man is rendered formidable to himself by his faults, his imprudence, and his passions. Fear not, therefore, the future, but yourself. The future God sends: misfortunes and unhappy hours man for the most part brings upon himself. *Live like a Christian;* and whatever may befall, you will live *happily*.

Fear nothing, if you have no cause to fear yourself. Labour to extricate yourself with a manly Christian spirit, from the present distressing

14 REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW YEAR.

circumstances, which perhaps lie heavy on you. Reflect seriously on the whole state of your affairs: consider of the best means to help yourself. Take courage to use them with vigour and prudence. And, if at last your strength be not sufficient, what you cannot effect, that will God perform.

Yes; *that* Thou wilt do, Divine Father! Thou who dost preserve and regard the little worm which crawls in the dust beneath us. Full of confidence will I give myself up to Thee; and whatever happens to me in the coming year, nothing shall tempt me to abandon my faith, and the holy word of Jesus Christ, Thy Son. How can futurity have terrors for me, if I find Thee therein? What loss can discourage me, if I lose not Thee?

More pious, more virtuous, more circumspect, than during the past year, will I walk before Thee; and with a new year begin a new life. Whatever trouble, whatever effort it may cost me, I will endeavour to put away my faults, and to subdue those vicious inclinations which secretly corrupt me.

And should I not survive this year, should it be the year of my death! Ah, then, when the tears of my friends shall be shed around my grave, may a good conscience bear me witness of Thy favour, and of my acceptance with Thee! I will prepare myself for it. If this be the *year of my death*, it

shall also be the *year of my birth* for a better world. With a *peaceful* smile, and blessed in Thee, my God, may I depart hence, when my hour arrives; and with a *joyful* smile enter upon that ETERNITY, in which awaits me unknown beatitude—Thy wonderful and endless gift.

II.

FAMILY DEVOTION.

EPHESIANS v. 15—21.

" See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

IT is moving and heart-elevating, to stand in the circle of a pious family, when it holds communion with the most holy and sublime Being in existence, with the DEITY Himself. Who can remain unmoved by the tear which trembles in the eye of a mother, when it is turned towards heaven; and she prays for the life, the health, the innocence, the welfare of her dearest children? Who can be unconcerned, when a worthy father, surrounded by his household, uncovers his head; and in sup-

plication for the happiness of his family, addresses himself to the King of kings, the Almighty God ? In whose breast will there not arise the most exalted feeling, when a guileless, blooming child, with uplifted hands, lisps a prayer to the invisible, eternal Father, for his parents, for his brothers, his sisters, and his playmates.

Formerly—who will, who can deny it ?—there was far more *domestic devotion* found in the family of the prince, as well as of the citizen, than there is at present. It cannot be denied, that there was likewise more manly strength, more rectitude, more magnanimity. There was in social life less levity and trifling, less odious party-spirit, and disgusting selfishness,—but more quiet domestic happiness, more cheerfulness, and more delight in great and useful things.

With the progress of the, so called, polish of manners, the fine religious sense of our ancestors, in many families, gradually disappeared. Men preferred wild dissipation to the more sober, but true enjoyment of life. They pursued happiness in outward objects, and lost it in their own bosoms. They attempted to exhibit a supposed intellectual superiority, at the same time that they were guilty of the most irrational behaviour, and disdained all public manifestation of religious feelings. They were not ashamed of having been found in improper

or dissolute society ; but of having been seen in the Temple of God. They were not ashamed of having read books which were immoral and destructive both to soul and body ; but of having been caught perusing a volume of devotion, of ethics, or of Holy Scripture. Thus, many a heart was by degrees bewildered, whilst it fancied itself improved—it aspired to intimacy with men of rank, but appeared to shrink from intercourse with God. It attached itself to things to which the irrational beast is no less addicted ; and forgot that man is also a citizen of a spiritual world, and can only ennoble himself by alliance with God—the Father and Lord of spirits.

But the levity and immorality of many fathers of families, and the folly of many mothers, have destroyed the happiness, the peace, and the respectability of their children. Many are prudently returning to the simple mode of life of former days :—would that they could also revive the virtues of their forefathers !

Then, likewise, would the much-forgotten devotional exercises be again introduced into pious families, and secure to them domestic peace, consolation in misfortune, and innocent cheerfulness diffused over the work of every day.

It is true, that the public worship of God in His holy Temple is of the utmost importance ;—but, how

often is it made a mere lifeless matter of custom ! because that heart which cannot occupy itself at other times with the Supreme Being, at length becomes cold, through the daily distractions of the world. How soon are those impressions obliterated, which a godly word makes upon our mind ! How soon are the most sacred vows forgotten, and the tears which accompany them, when a man returns from the church to his old pursuits, in quite another sphere ; and for a long succeeding week neither can nor will think any more about them ! How ! shall we then be Christians only on the Sabbath ? Is not every day of the week God's day—a holy day ?

Yet we must cautiously preclude all misunderstanding, all false interpretations, when we speak of *domestic worship*. It is not, and never can be, meant to designate by that term, the object of greater or less meetings of different persons and families, who may associate to perform a private religious service. Such assemblies are in themselves by no means deserving of censure, and unlawful ; yet they often produce in society consequences, which the Christian, as a member of society, will carefully avoid.

The Christian must respect the relative obligations of civil life, and consider the judgment and feelings of those with whom he is obliged to have

connexion. The world—even the most worldly minded in it, never considers the service of God offensive,—but often the mode of worship which is used. Whatever is uncommon or ostentatious excites inquiry, and frequently suspicion. Christian humility will not permit the feelings of the heart to be publicly proclaimed. It seeks for solitude in the recesses of the temple; whilst the Pharisee attracts attention by his prayer at the corner of the street. (Matt. vi. 6.)

On the other hand, how beautiful, harmless, and irreproachable, is the daily devotion which takes place in the narrow circle of each individual family! Here the master of the house and the pious mistress become the priest and priestess of the Most High; and the same chamber in which we enjoy the gifts of the Eternal Father—the same chamber in which we experience the vicissitudes of sickness and health, and which shall one day contain our death-bed,—becomes a temple of the Lord.

Here is assembled a small society, united by the sacred ties of blood—when the sweet sleep of night has refreshed their limbs. They bring, at the golden hour of morn, the offering of their thanks to a bountiful Creator, in humble prayer; or they come together in the evening, delighted with the completion of their day's work, and need-

ing rest. Their last look is directed towards the omnipotent Protector of their existence ; and whilst in the nightly heavens a thousand glittering stars declare the glory of the Lord—whilst, perhaps, in a thousand worlds unknown to us His holy name is praised—our prayer also ascends to Him through the stillness of the night ;—and He hears it.

These HOURS OF DEVOTION make an impression on the heart even of the youngest child. He knows not as yet any higher author of his being, than his parents ; and he sees them full of lowly reverence for the name of the invisible God. The same awe pervades his heart ; and the force of example implants religious principles in his breast, before his understanding is capable of giving any account of the affections which gradually spring up within him. Hence we should accustom even infants to the external form of reverence during prayer. It is an address to the unseen Creator and Preserver of all living things. And though the child do not yet, perhaps, comprehend the meaning of the prayer, yet he perceives the sense which the respectful posture indicates. It is only through external and sensible objects that you can work, in the first place, on the tender mind of a child. He will soon be conscious of the delightful feelings of the love of God, when afterwards his

awakening intellect first learns the reasons and importance of the religion of Jesus Christ.

In order that prayer shall operate fruitfully on the heart, it must not be always *in the same form*. Prayer must never be made a mere work of memory, but must be uttered from the soul, and with a full consciousness of its nature and purport. But whatever the memory has once acquired, the mouth can readily deliver, without the spirit's being present to the act. How! must it not be called a mockery of God, if you address Him without correspondent thoughts? Devotion vanishes when the mind is distracted; and the distraction often arises against our will, when the spirit is not allured to attention and reflection. A single inward thought on God, or a silent sigh, is more pleasing to Him than the most eloquent prayer without devotion.

If the father or the mother be not always able or disposed to deliver a petition to heaven from the heart, corresponding to their actual feelings, there are not wanting excellent books of prayer, written by worthy, pious, and spiritually-minded men. Our devotion will be enlightened and embellished by the beauty and vigour of their sentiments. Their feelings will become our feelings; their thoughts, our thoughts. The social prayer in

the circle of our relatives and household, leaves behind in the soul a soothing echo. In solitude and silence shall we also offer up many an earnest application to the omniscient God, who well knows the state of our heart, and its manifold concerns.

For this reason it is also commendable in mothers to begin early to teach their children to address to God some words of prayer, freely from the heart : not a speech learnt by rote, but an expression of individual feeling. Nothing can be more affecting to parents, than when their child utters, with stammering effort, only a single evening prayer to God ; when, with folded hands, he speaks but a few words to his heavenly Father.

The domestic devotion of a Christian family, however, *is not confined to prayer alone*. There are innumerable occasions on which the worship of God may be performed in lovely simplicity. It is not necessary to this end, that one should have the name of God constantly on the lips. The saying of " Lord, Lord," may at last become, like other things, a matter of custom, which is always prejudicial to sincerity. In labour we should give ourselves entirely to labour,—in the affairs and either public or private, we should be entirely to them : in the act of prayer could we devote ourselves entirely to the human mind is limited ; it cannot at

the same moment apply itself to different objects : and while it is employed in household concerns, it cannot be occupied in those which are of a heavenly nature.

The constant utterance of the divine Name is in some degree a profanation of it. The Christian of delicate and proper feeling is accustomed to avoid this as carefully as did the Jews of old, who, in their time, held the name of Jehovah far too sacred to be spoken by earthly lips. Instead of God we may praise Nature or Providence :—and what do we mean by Nature, Providence, Fate, or Destiny, but God alone ? When with dull tone the death-bell tolls, and the corpse of a neighbour is carried past our dwelling, the pious husband presses the hand of his beloved wife with a sad foreboding, and the thoughts of eternity become more solemn in them both. Their faith and hope are raised towards an all-ruling Providence. Here is *domestic devotion*.

The spring scatters its thousand blossoms on the world ; the lark soars and sings above the clouds, and the nightingale pours forth her strains in the gloomy thicket ; a wonderful transformation shines throughout the whole landscape. The enchanted father points out to his listening son the wonders of creation, shows him the traces of Supreme Wisdom, and explains how all nature is beneficently ordered. A joyful and holy feeling

takes possession of the soul of both at the sight of these wonderful works of the Almighty. This is *domestic worship of God*.

How many solitary hours does a family pass within itself! It is delightful to sweeten them with cheerful conversation; but not less so to employ them sometimes in higher and more serious matters. A good book of prayer or devotion, an edifying work written for the improvement of the heart and conduct, the plain intelligible passages of the Bible, the psalms of the royal poet, or a narrative of the life of Jesus Christ, is read aloud. The family stands around listening; and the devotion of all its members is excited,—the understanding of each one is instructed. Virtue is exhibited in its native beauty, vice in its deformity. We become better whilst we hear and learn—we approach, in heart, nearer to our God.—This is also *domestic worship*.

These few examples show how manifold are the occasions for domestic worship of the Deity. On this account it is not necessary to be always admonishing and teaching with formal words of edification, and encouragement of piety. They might fatigue and disgust by sameness and excess.

No! ye fathers and mothers, and all to whom religion and the love of God are sacred,—the most pleasing instruction, the most effective sermon, is

to be found in your hourly course of life. Your example will be more powerful than your words;—your actions more fruitful than your teaching. (Coloss. iii. 17.)

The industrious, orderly, fond father of a family, —the faithful, circumspect, friendly, serious mother —the obedient, generous child—the active, trusty servant;—these all are continual priests and priestesses of God. Their whole course is open and upright, and a fruit of their inward piety. The devotion of their souls is reflected in their actions, as from a mirror. Whilst in men who are immersed in the bustle of the world, those holy dispositions which the public worship of God creates on Sunday, are speedily removed; they are perpetuated in us by quiet habits of domestic religion. If others, careless and light-minded, forget the praiseworthy intentions they had formed, when labouring under misfortune or disease; such resolutions are confirmed in our minds by private intercourse with God.

Domestic devotion operates with a mild and sublime influence on the soul. It is that which qualifies us for the proper station we should occupy in the world. It is as much connected with the affairs and accidents of life, as with the hopes and blessings of eternity. We appear when we turn ourselves towards God, no more as strangers and

pilgrims before Him, but as children who are daily around their father.

We feel ourselves, through the worship of God, which we offer Him in the circle of our relatives, or in solitude, every way stronger, better, and more inclined to good—we act more nobly—we prepare for ourselves and others more happiness, and we enjoy a heaven of domestic peace. We avoid with greater care, things unbecoming our character, things which might be a stumbling-block to one who seldom reflects that for such matters he must render an account to the Most Holy. A conscience free from reproach diffuses unspeakable serenity over the mind. We are more sensible of the joys of life, because we enjoy life more purely.

Yes, my God, my Father, my All!—yes, I am aware of my happiness, in not being an alien from Thee! I should have been unworthy to live a single day, in which I had not remembered Thee. Thy Son Jesus Christ not only prayed in the Temple—He prayed also in the dwellings of his beloved disciples—in the solitude of Gethsemane. So will I, also, Thy child, worship Thee in my paternal habitation, or in the lonely fields, far from my native country. Thine omnipresence converts our chamber into a church. Here can I worship Thee in spirit and in truth.

Every thing is sanctified to a pious mind; and,

where Thou art, unholy things shall vanish. Thou dwellest with me—shall not then Thy blessed peace pervade my dwelling? Can I dishonour by sinful acts the still chamber in which I have so often with fervency supplicated for Thy Holy Spirit? Can I curse in the same places in which I pray? Can I, on the very spot where I appear before the Omniscient Judge of my most secret thoughts, utter deceit and falsehood? Can I there, where I entreat Thine eternal love, permit myself to indulge in a disgraceful ebullition of envy, hatred, slander, or revenge?

No, my God! whither shall my heart, in the consciousness of guilt,—whither shall my countenance, full of shame, be turned, if, in my private dwelling, in the loneliest corner of it, I must blush before Thy presence? Where should I feel happy upon earth, if I create to myself a hell within the walls of my habitation?

I well know the delightful blessings attendant on domestic devotion, and I wish to be a partaker of them. If I be always godly, God will always be my God. When I awake, and when I fall asleep, Thou art the object of my thoughts. When, sooner or later, in this very dwelling where I have so often drawn nigh to Thee with prayer, I shall fall asleep for the last time—fall asleep in Thine arms, O Thou eternal Father; then shalt Thou be my last thought.

And in another life, in a higher world, when I shall again awake into consciousness—then again shalt Thou be my first thought. When a new world shall encompass me with glory—still will my God be to me no strange God. Here shall I fall asleep—there shall I awake in Thine arms. The loving Father to whom my spirit here attaches itself, in infantine simplicity, will also be my Father in yonder regions.

III.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

PSALM xliiii. 3, 4.

“ O send out Thy light and Thy truth ; let them lead me ; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy. Yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God.”

THERE is not, amongst all the nations of the earth, any religion without some public worship of the Deity, and some solemn usages connected with it.

No one—either the king, or the poorest of his people—refuses to take a share in religious service of some description. How is it then ? Amongst *Christians*, among those who glory in being the most enlightened of mankind, can neglect and contempt of divine worship meet with approbation ? Amongst Christians alone can there be individuals who seek to acquire influence and distinction by not doing as millions of their brothers and sisters do ? How ! is our religion less holy, less replete with blessings, than that of barbarians ? Are our

churches less capable of awakening devotional affections ?

Examine your own heart,—you who absent yourself from Public Service, or despise it ; and inquire whether your reasons are really as good and as wise as you suppose. Is it not from a deficiency of religious feeling, that whatever is sublime, holy, and becoming, appears to you as a lifeless, superfluous matter of custom ? Is it not vanity which influences you—a desire that you may pass current with certain persons, as more refined and more intelligent than others ? Is it not an unseasonable shame which keeps you back from the performance of your duty, when you would be thought something above the common rank among those who themselves neglect the public worship of God, and to whom you attribute superior intellect ? Is it not, after all, your levity of mind and propensity to self-indulgence, that you wish to excuse by arguments against the utility of public worship ?

You say : ‘ The sermon is not always edifying or instructive to me. Whatever I can hear in the Church, I know already :’ Be it so—but still an indifferent orator often says useful things ; and how many a truth, salutary in your case, of which you would not for years have thought, may unex-

pectedly be placed before you, in a serious moment.

You say : ‘ I can worship God even as well in my own house and in my chamber, as in the Church.’ Perhaps you may ;—but is it done ? Are you always attuned to devotion ? Will not a hundred other domestic occupations draw you off from this ? Will not your mind be more easily warmed with charitable feelings, when you adore the Most High, the Father of all, in company with your fellow-creatures ?

You say : ‘ People would smile if I were again to go to Church ; and would take me for a hypocrite.’ So,—it is only your vanity, then, which prevents your fulfilment of a becoming duty. A duty, I say, which you are bound to perform even towards your fellow-citizens—towards those with whom you live. You are, I admit, more learned, better educated than they ; so that you have little, which is new, to learn at Church. Why, if you fancy that the people see and regard you, do you set the illiterate and uncultivated the bad example of neglecting what is frequently to them the only opportunity they have of improving their hearts ? Do not you yourself blame any one who attempts to weaken the authority of government, and the restraints of law—without which, you are aware, there would

be no security or peace? Why, then, do you not blame yourself, who weaken the influence of that public worship of God, without which the people would relapse into licentious barbarism?

The Sunday is to all a holy day. A thousand people in a thousand different tongues worship God, and pray before His throne. You stand alone, as if you did not belong to the great holy family of your heavenly Father. Cut off from the community of your brethren, no man associates with you in your solitary conduct, but the wild Indian, who yet knows not God, and follows his own appetites and pleasures—whilst in the same hour millions of rational beings prostrate themselves before the Eternal and Infinite Divinity.

When the solemn notes of the bells resound from the church tower, do they not seem to strive, with all the force of their brazen tongues, to bring you to your recollection? And do they not appear to call to you and say: ‘Wherefore do you exclude yourself from the community of Christians?’

When your accidental glance wandered down the gloom of the sacred aisle, and discovered in the distance the very font where you, when an infant, received the consecration of Christianity; when you saw the place beside the altar, where with pious emotions you were, for the first time, admitted to the communion of Christ, and partook

of the commemorative supper of your divine Instructor and Redeemer ; when you saw the holy place, where once you stood, for an important moment, while invocation was made to heaven, and a wife was espoused to you for the companion of your days—did not all these things render this Church more sacred to you ?

Unhappy man ! if you had there no feeling, my words are urged in vain upon you. Your illumination has cost you a tender heart—the best possession of man. Under your enlightening, your more noble faculties have perished.

The solemnization of Sunday is a venerable institution, even like Christianity itself. The Turk keeps the Friday holy—the Jew hallows the Saturday—the Christian celebrates on every Sunday the joyful event on which the superiority of his religion was triumphantly established—the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Sunday is the LORD'S DAY—a day of rest, to all people, from earthly labour and secular occupations—in order that the soul may be raised from the low cares of this transitory life, to reflection on the Divine Fountain of its existence, and to contemplation of its eternal destiny. The plough of the farmer rests—the workshops are still—the children's schools of industry are shut—every rank, every age shakes off the dust of the week-day, and

seeks a holiday garment for the Sabbath. Trifling as are these outward signs of respect for the Lord's Day, they yet have great effect on the mind of man. His inward feelings will become more solemn and more tranquil. He will be more inclined to quiet self-examination ; and the respite from the troubles of the week, which he now enjoys, leads him to God.

If Sunday and the public worship of God were to be forgotten in the world, a rebarbarism of the people would, in a very few years, be the consequence. Oppressed by the cares of life, and incessantly spurred on to exertion by the goad of covetousness, man will seldom find a moment in which he may think seriously of his future destiny. Nothing induces him to live for his better interests, for immortality—he will only exist for a fugitive terrestrial day. He will neither, out of love to God, act generously ; nor, from fear of retribution, conduct himself with justice : his religion will be thenceforth cunning craftiness,—his heaven, mere contented egotism.

The business of the week distracts the mind—Sunday again recalls it. Care for a livelihood is converted into care for the soul. Every thing is hushed—every thing at rest—the doors of the churches alone stand open.

And, even if the heart were inclined to no pious reflections, it would be carried along by the salutary

force of example in the great congregation of Christians. We see assembled around us hundreds and thousands of those, with whom we dwell together in one and the same place,—with whom we sympathise in joy and sorrow—in the public good or bad fortune of the land. We see around us those who sooner or later shall follow our coffin to the grave, and shed over us the tears of friendship.

We stand among them, assembled there before the Omnipresent, as fellow-members of one great family. Here, then, is no longer that distinction which separates man from man in the social world. The high one is neighbour to the low—the poor one stands and prays beside the rich. As before God there is no rank—no respect of persons—so also here in the congregation of His family, we all are but as children of one eternal Father.

This circumstance alone, that the public worship of God exhibits in so lively a manner the original equality of all mortals, exalts the soul of the Christian. It admonishes the proud to be humble, the downcast to take courage. No human institution effects this: the Church alone, and once hereafter death, brings back the human race to their equality in the sight of God.

But, if even this view of men offering up their prayers and praises, of the thousands who with a thousand different dispositions appear before their

God, cannot allure you to devotion—if the solemn strain which ascends to heaven from the lips of a whole community, cannot collect your distracted mind—think! on this day, at this hour, every true worshipper of Jesus within the compass of the earth is prostrate before his God—numberless nations pray at the same time with you. Princes have descended from their thrones, and under a sense of their mortality adore the Majesty on high. Even where on the waves of a distant sea a Christian ship is floating—there solitarily arises over the deep abyss the sacred song of thanksgiving and glory to the all-protecting God. What! can you alone this day be silent? Cannot you join in the hallelujahs of a whole earth?

Think!—on this very spot where you stand at present in the Church, will hereafter your grandchildren and posterity, perhaps, stand to worship, when you exist no more. Here also they will remember you. Perhaps the place where your foot now rests will be moistened by the tears of a faithful son, of a tender daughter, of a friendly brother, of a loving sister—when the recollection of you is quickened in their hearts. Can you, surrounded as you are by such examples, urged by such reflections, remain indifferent in the temple of the Lord?

Think!—whilst your eye glances over the devout

assembly in which the aged appears beside the child—the pallid face of the sick man, beside the blooming countenance of the healthy one—the earnest frown of the man of business, beside the uncertain gaze of the heedless youth—the troubled aspect of the careful man, beside the smiling eyes of the contented one :—think !—in a hundred years all these blooming, all these withering forms, will have departed from the earth—and quite other figures will occupy these long rows—among which *you* will be no more ! *You* also will be no more !

By reflections of this kind, you will be involuntarily brought to perceive the sublime purpose for which the public worship of God is especially appointed. Say no longer : ‘ I can worship God in my chamber, wherefore then need I frequent a Church ? ’ No ! These perceptions, this inspiration, are not to be obtained except in the temple, which is consecrated to God. The divine word will there be addressed to you by the minister of Christ. The precepts and the examples of a holy life are impressed upon your soul, or the mysteries of religion are brought to your remembrance. Be it even that these things are not always well adapted to your present spiritual need—be it even that one subject or another do not edify you as much as you desire—it may operate, nevertheless, on other minds ; it may be calculated for others.

Why are you discontented? How in a mixed assembly can every doctrine or exhortation be equally valuable and important to all? The day shall come when you too shall feel the address of the preacher directed to your soul.

Did you attend a sermon which left you unedified—then remember that you might still be useful, at the same time, to another person, by the example which you set him. You were present; you misled not weaker minds by notoriously neglecting the public worship of God. They found edification, instruction, and consolation, in the holy discourse which they heard. To them it became useful, and your example was beneficial to them.

Are you a hypocrite, because you come to Church without deriving improvement from the preaching of the divine word? You who have the good fortune to be more enlightened than others—who perceive God in His wondrous works, still more distinctly than others. You worship God in His temple after your own mode; others in other ways. Are you, therefore, a dissembler? Does not the mouth of the child and that of the experienced veteran utter the praises of God in very different accents? Are they, therefore, dissemblers, because the tone of their words is different?

The stammering of the child, and the fervent ejaculations of the old man, are equally pleasing to God. Be not ashamed to worship God in company with them according to your best judgment ; and that alone is *worship*, if, through your example, others are induced to do the same thing—others who have not so much power of mind as you,—others who look up to you, and are always inclined to follow you,—as your children, your pupils, your domestics.

In this respect you worship God,—that you retain the love and confidence of your fellow-creatures—without which you are not in a condition to do all the good which you might do. He who is ashamed to take a share in the public worship of God, repulses the confiding heart of his fellow-citizens. Of what is the despiser of divine worship ashamed? Is he ashamed of the religion of Jesus? or is he ashamed of his fellow-creatures, and their inferior intelligence? The first is an abomination ; the second, offensive pride. You separate yourself from the sacred assembly of your fellow-citizens :—they cast you off from their confidence, as a despiser of godliness. Who is safe with him who disregards our most holy convictions? Of what in short will he be ashamed, be he as bad as he may, who contemns the religion of Jesus? Say

not: ‘ But I worship my God in silence.’ Who then saw your devotion—who heard your prayer—that he may believe you ?

Not only, however, should the short hour of public worship, but the whole Sunday be devoted to improvement of the mind. *The Lord’s day is a day of rest.* You should lay aside customary business—your body should recruit itself, and your soul gather fresh strength. You will be so much the more energetically industrious after refreshment, when you again take in hand the work committed to you. You must give your servants some recreation, in order that they may in their way have some enjoyment of their life of labour. You must rest from every thing, except from doing good. By all means hasten to the pressing need of your neighbour, when you are called to help him. Beneficence is the best service of God. Whoever lets his brother perish for want of pity, violates the holiness of the day ; and stands a detestable hypocrite before God and man.

The withdrawing from your usual weekly occupations, gives you in the circle of your family, and out of it, many private hours. Even this is necessary to you. You should devote them to holy meditations ; in order that by such means you may strengthen your good resolutions for the ensuing week. Bring home to your beloved family

whatever was most worthy of remark in the discourse you have heard ; or take a book of devotion, and read to yourself words of instruction for your heart ; let one member of your family read to all some edifying work, or precepts, warnings, encouragements, and examples of a holy course of life, from the inspired pages of the Bible.

So will the Sunday be in truth a *Lord's day*, i. e. a day consecrated to the Lord. These pious occupations will shed a serene tranquillity over your head. You will be made by them a better man. You will feel more fortitude in adverse days, more caution in happy hours ; and above all, you will be still more joyful in the remembrance of your God.

It is not meant that on Sunday, being occupied unceasingly with religious thoughts, you should renounce all other enjoyments, all other relaxations. No—mortal man has only a certain measure of strength.

Go hence, and take part in those innocent delights from which you must abstain during the week, on account of your labour and necessary engagements. You, as well as the worm, are born to some enjoyment—only withdraw yourself when these indulgences degenerate into riotous rudeness, into a source of discord, into an occasion of sin or seduction, into a subject for repentance.

Then restrain your levity—be master of your effervescent feelings ; and you have not defiled your soul with blameable pleasures, nor have you violated the Lord's day. This is the fruit of a pure worship of God, that it sanctifies our mind, so that starting back from coarse sensual pleasures, it will not wallow in the mire of base lusts and passions.

Never will I profane my God and my Redeemer on the Lord's day ; never will I on a day on which I go to worship the Deity dishonour myself by unworthy behaviour. Not only my mouth, but my conduct, must glorify God. And especially the high festivals of Christianity, the holy solemnities of Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide should be dedicated in pure devotion to the service of the Lord, and spent in Christian piety.

Thy Holy Spirit, O God, penetrates my heart when I stand in the assembly of Christians ; and a thousand souls are humbled in prayer before Thee. Where can we be better, than *there* with Thee ? Where can I feel more sensibly the Divine Majesty and the nothingness of man, than *there* where the prince and the beggar, beside each other, bend in supplication ? Where can I be reminded more strongly than in Thy house, that we mortals are the children of a heavenly Father, to whom we all cry ; Abba, Abba !

Yes—may the places where my ancestors have

prayed to Thee, where my posterity shall pray to Thee—be now a hallowed sanctuary. As often as my foot treads that ground, let my glorifying spirit meditate on Thee ; as often as the sacred anthems are sung around me, let my soul rise to Thee on the wings of devotion, and be filled with the awful thought—that hereafter when these songs of praise resound upon my tomb, I shall laud and magnify Thee, Thou nameless, Infinite Source of all good ! in higher worlds, and united with more exalted beings, whose hallelujahs re-echo through the heaven of heavens.

IV.

DOMESTIC PEACE.

EPHESIANS vi. 1—6.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

THE bonds of relationship which knit together husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, are the most close and sacred upon earth. Woe to him, who by unkindness profanes them! He goes through the world like Cain, an outcast.

Where can we more joyfully rest from weariness and cares, than in the bosom of our family? What

hand more tenderly dries up the tears from our cheeks, and the sweat of death upon our forehead, than the hand of conjugal affection ?

Hail to Thee, blessed domestic intercourse, in which hearts created for one another live together peacefully and lovingly ! I will extol thine enviable lot. When the misery of war banishes pleasure from the land, it finds with Thee a refuge. When the storm rages without, in Thy circle smiles repose.

The industrious father goes forth into the throng of life to provide for his family ; his industry must bring prosperity to the house. And when the day of labour is passed, then he returns into the joyful circle of those who expect him with longing hearts, and thank him with tender looks. The whole world may wrong him ; his own beloved society will do him justice.

And what he has earned and obtained abroad, that the economy of his faithful spouse preserves. She attends to the largest and the smallest things, and finds in her sphere nothing too trifling. She carefully cherishes at home the tender blossom of domestic happiness. She watches over all who belong to her with friendly sympathy, and she belongs entirely to each one, in a different way. She daily gladdens the life of all.

The children are bright in blooming innocence.

The narrow space of the paternal house limits the whole happiness of their youth. Their greatest pleasure is cheerful obedience. With love and reverence they hang upon their fondling parents. Even the domestic servants belong to the circle of these happy ones. They feel a faithful attachment to the house in which so much attention is paid to them. They have not masters and mistresses, but only new parents. Every occurrence which affords happiness to the family, no less rejoices them.

Reciprocal love sheds a wonderful charm over the most ordinary things; and gives even to the most trivial a higher value and importance. If any one suffer pain or distress, him all surround with anxious solicitude for his relief; and the happiness of the individual is the great concern of all. Look at that poor widow, who, in her corner, lives forgotten by all the world. She has seen the corpse of a beloved husband and friend carried to the grave. She remained without assistance, and excluded from the ranks of the joyful. No one will now recognise her in her poverty, no one invites her. But do not bewail her! She is richer than you think. A pious daughter works in the day, and by the glimmer of the nightly lamp, for her mother's benefit; a daughter who denies herself the gaiety and enjoyments of her former pleasures, to devote

herself entirely to her mother, to support and enliven her in her destitute and forlorn condition. Bewail her not! she revels in heavenly feelings, which are not to be purchased at any price.

Why do you weep for the old man, who languishes in captivity, because faithless fortune has robbed him of his means, and he cannot liquidate the debts which burden him? He is already liberated. A grateful son sold himself to the army, and paid with his freedom the debt of a beloved father. Oh what great, what inexpressible happiness, under the pressure of the hardest fate, flows from the sanctuary of domestic concord! How blessed are its consequences! How lasting is the remembrance of it! Domestic peace introduces a semblance of heaven into a house, but discord that of hell.

Truly, it is lamentable for him, who cannot be happy in the bosom of his family, who must seek his enjoyment elsewhere than at home! Wherever he goes, he is but a stranger: ah! he is a stranger also in his own dwelling, where he is treated and lodged only as a guest. He must shut up his troubles within himself. No sympathizing heart lays itself on his. He must share his most joyful hours with strangers—and the world returns him nothing but civility. He bewails the day when he gave his hand to a permanent union, and his

children surround him like self-planted thorns, which bear no fruit.

O God, Thou knowest from how many causes the number of happy families is always liable to diminish, and of the unhappy ones to increase. Even at the very commencement of many marriages is the foundation laid for the subsequent discord of the house. Without consideration of the importance of matrimonial connections, persons enter into them, who know nothing of each other,—of their mutual qualities, faults, or ways of thinking. For the sake of *a name* and a larger fortune the peace and joy of a whole life are sold. Ah ! no family name can reconcile the heart, which is rendered desolate, to the bitterness of disappointment ; and the amassed gold is too soon outweighed by the tears of successive hours.

A happy fate is to be predicted of marriages only where on account of the mutual love, the way of thinking, and the qualifications of the parties, it is known that they are independent of other people, and able, even in the event of unexpected poverty, to support themselves, to live contentedly, and to be happy.

We have seen obscure families become great and noble, and rise from their original poverty, through the man's virtue, activity, and powers ; through the wife's innocence, kindness, and eco-

mony. We have seen flourishing families come to nought through the dissension of the parents, which has affected the children, and ruined the household.

Herein also lies a seed of domestic discord,—that newly-married people, led astray by false ideas in the beginning, seem to belong too little to each other, and seek their happiness abroad in varied dissipations: before they learn to accustom themselves reciprocally to their respective weaknesses, or mutually to correct them, they are corrupted by the bustle of society. The thirst after dissipation makes the uniform tranquillity of home appear insipid, and produces an habitual levity. Thoughtlessness leads to prodigalities, which shake the stability of the house, or to dangerous acquaintances, which too often are repented of with tears of blood.

Yet more certainly and dreadfully than all other evils, does the contempt of religion destroy domestic happiness. With pious feelings in his breast, no mortal can be wholly miserable; he will show love to others, and demand love for himself; he will hide the failings of others, learn to bear many defects with meekness, and overcome the most difficult of persuasion. When peace fails in a house, inquire, and you will find religion deficient, and the blessed precepts of Jesus supplanted

by miserable passions which usurp their place. Where you seek for a sense of duty, there you will find only a cold calculating prudence, and reciprocal selfishness among the household ; instead of trust in the Divine Providence, you will see want of patience under misfortunes ; instead of love of the Most Holy, you will behold in the children fondness for empty glitter, self-conceit, and an audacity which leads them even to deride their parents ; no where firm pious principles and an habitual Christian sense of obligation.

Would you preserve peace in your house, or perhaps bring back again the quiet which had departed, let the first thing be—to *revive in the breasts of those belonging to you the feelings of religion* : casual conversations concerning the existence of the soul after death, and the hopes of happiness beyond the grave, as well as an hundred other opportunities, open to you the way. If you once succeed in bringing a lively sense of the duty of Divine Worship and domestic Devotion into the circle of your household, then is the foundation-stone of the temple of peace securely laid.

Be yourself the first whose conduct may be an example to the rest. Show yourself with constant serenity and friendly behaviour before the household ; give proof of your love for all, and demand, instead of cold duty, their love in return.

Be indulgent to their weaknesses; excite their virtues; banish ill-humour, and become all to all. Thus is the religion of Jesus introduced into your house, even when you have not named its name: for this religion is love. (1 John iv. 16.) And where Christian love is permitted to rule, there contention is for ever banished. The quarrelsome disposition which disturbs the repose of all, the mean spirit which takes delight in the misfortunes of others, and the jealousy which torments itself, are no longer inmates.

But, further, there can exist no domestic harmony, *without reciprocal respect in words and deeds*—without giving honour one to another.

The origin of domestic dissension lies for the most part in the absence of mutual respect. This is the cause why many couples, who, in the time of courtship loved each other tenderly, in a few weeks after the wedding, begin with discord and quarrelling. When after marriage they become too familiar with each other, they become also more negligent in the propriety of their behaviour; those pleasant observances by which they sought formerly to show themselves anxious to oblige, are forgotten; one becomes more careless of his exterior; the other is indifferent whether her manners be still pleasing or not. Rudenesses extinguish at length the last spark of respect between them:

they disagree about trifles, make greater pretensions than formerly, and seek to practise petty revenge, in order to have satisfaction for supposed neglect.

Is not this the history of more than one unhappy marriage? As in the presence of other people, so also in the family, mutual respect should be kept up between the couple; as before strangers, so in private, should there also be an inviolably modest behaviour—the most beautiful ornament of love. Every unbecoming treatment of one another is an offence against domestic happiness, and leaves behind a wound which bleeds for a great length of time.

Let the like friendliness and dignity of external carriage prevail in the Christian family towards children and servants. Let every censure, every demand, every refusal, be expressed with forbearance, and never be accompanied by low rudeness. Would you turn your children's and your servants' love of their duty into a matter of honour—do not blame them before others, when they are in fault, but place the unworthiness of their conduct before them in private. They will love you in return for this forbearance; they will follow you with pleasure; they will not lose their esteem with others, and be embittered by insult and derision.

Would you see domestic misery created ? Go there—where the parents have so far lost the feelings of propriety and relative obligation, that they shamelessly upbraid each other with mutual faults, before their own children. Well-disposed children will be silent, and blush for their parents; but this silence, this blushing, does not exclude contempt for them. Go there—where brothers and sisters find pleasure in causing each other offence ; and parents stand by indifferently, or laugh at their disputes. Here souls born for union are separated for ever. Go there—where a discontented wife persecutes the servants with peevish looks, and ever blames, and is ever ready with reproachful words—no blessing will dwell in such a house. Servants despise and slander the master and mistress ; and the household falls to ruin.

He only receives respect who *pays* it to others. Not the higher station but the higher virtue gains respect from inferiors.

Another means for the preservation of domestic peace, is the *rooting out of all reciprocal mistrust*. We instil into every one a certain respect for himself, if we give him credit for good. And he who has respect for himself, will blush to do any wrong to others.

Husbands and wives, ye who have concluded a sacred covenant for your lives, let your whole con-

duct towards each other be consistent with truth ; do not even seem, in jest, to be angry with each other ; do not deceive one another, even in jest, even with a little craft, with a slight untruth. Speak not to each other without the fullest openness of heart : thus is your tranquillity of mind for ever secured, your conscience will be clear and peaceful. Thus can no third person thrust himself between you ; thus the poison of tale-bearing cannot destroy the harmony of your souls ; thus will not suspicion or jealousies divide you. Woe, if a man do not trust her on whose bosom he rests ! When once the hell of jealousy and suspicion burns, it is never extinguished—and the scar of the burning cannot be concealed.

Even so, rob not children, through hastiness, of their confidence in you. Let them, with all their failings, be constantly open-hearted towards you. Form not hypocrites through over-hasty harshness. On what should children put their trust, if they must shut up their mistaken hearts from their father and their mother ? If they have once lost courage to let you see into their hearts, *they have lost their faith in the attachment of their parents.*

Is it, however, your firm determination carefully to uphold a mutual confidence between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters,

masters and servants ? then do justice to the good qualities which they possess, honour their present praiseworthy conduct, and take care not to reproach them with a failing which has long clung to them. All confidence is lost where an unkind hand again and again points to a past occurrence which we ourselves would for ever hide from our own eyes. Banish, ye parents, from among you this upbraiding on account of past unpleasant circumstances ; and suffer not the recollection of imprudences committed by your children and your servants to be revived.

The last bulwark of domestic peace which I shall name is, secrecy concerning all domestic affairs.

Let it be one of the first regulations of every house, not to allow the secrets of the household and the family concerns to be known. Then is peace betrayed, when one reposes in strangers, it may be even relations, a confidence which is only due to oneself ! Silence alone draws a firm wall and defence around the sanctuary of our domestic happiness : when this wall is broken down, then rush inquisitiveness, wickedness, malice, and the gossip of the world, unresisted, into our doors ; our secrets are treated of in the market and the streets ; we stand as it were uncovered, a show to idle gapers—and reproach follows us in all our steps, quickened with the laugh of scorn. Our secrets

being once in foreign hands, our dominion ends with ourselves, and strangers rule. Our servants, our children, should not trust to any ear even the most trifling, the most innocent thing that happens in our house. Not because danger is always connected with it, but that they may practise the art of silence, and be proved in it. Banish the tattler and tale-bearer from your sight; for the most insignificant tattler has often caused the most incurable dissension. But would you know that your secrets are respected, respect those of others. Do not search with eager curiosity after that which is said and done in another house,—not after the circumstances of the married people, of the parents or children, amongst your neighbours.

In whatever station of life I may be placed, O my God, let me act so providently and wisely, that through me, DOMESTIC PEACE, this precious blessing to the race of mortals, may never be destroyed. Yes,—to Thee are the happiness and peace of Thy creatures most dear, O Father of all! They shall always be respected by me, that I may stand before Thee with a cheerful conscience.

And among my relations, my household, among those who are the dearest to us, will I myself be the first to promote universal love, heartfelt mutual confidence, and the happiness of concord. It is

my paradise on earth, which my hand can build up and may destroy. Shall I then desire my own misery ! I will endeavour to cast off my failings, my evil habits ; and supplicate Thy blessing.

Yes, Thou alone, Thou all-bountiful Father of the world, be also the Father and Director of my family. Lead Thou them with Thy wisdom. Sanctify Thou their conduct. Take Thou our concerns under Thy protection ! Blessed by Thee, blessed in ourselves, we shall then have here below a sweet foretaste of heavenly beatitude.

V.

CONTENTMENT WITH OUR CONDITION.

1 TIM. vi. 6—9.

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

A VERY common, but often a concealed cause of disappointment in civil life, and of misfortune in domestic affairs, is the disgust which many men feel with the situations into which they are brought by their *calling and condition*. Some, it is true, assume openly a very contented mien, that they may not disclose their secret weaknesses, and that their pride may not be humbled : but at heart they are far from being satisfied. To their confidential friends they will even rail at that, which before others they had the prudence to extol. They long, with impatience, for some other state, and often regard their present circumstances as intolerable.

There are others, again, who in their passage through life are never content with any situation in which they can be placed. In every state they perceive some unexpected and disagreeable things, by which it is rendered unpleasant to them. They soon acquire a distaste for the sort of business which is allotted to them—some dislike of the men with whom they are obliged to be connected. They find not what they seek, and seek what they cannot find, namely, *peace of mind arising out of external circumstances*. We hear such men constantly complaining; they become peevish whenever they think of their condition. They are always desiring a change of objects—they alter their mode of life as often as they can—they undertake a variety of schemes—again grow tired of their new pursuits, and come in the end to nothing.

They seek their happiness every where except where it ought to be sought—in *the recesses of a good heart*. They would willingly improve the whole world—which is good for nothing in their view—but they do not begin the improvement with themselves. Why do they overlook, in their desire for an impossibility, the possibility which they might attain?

The discontented man is the suicide of his happiness. He relinquishes the good under his hand, for the better at a distance. A perpetual thirst

torments him—whilst his waywardness scorns the fountain which bubbles at his feet. He rejects with senseless obstinacy the blessings of his present state—his folly becomes a burden to himself and a derision to others.

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.”—
(1 TIM. vi. 6.)

There is in the world no happiness without contentment : contentment is, indeed, happiness itself. Would you then be perfectly happy in your station, learn to be contented with it.

Contentedness with our station, with our outward circumstances, consists in being satisfied with the advantages and pleasures which we derive from it;—in the prevailing conviction that through diligence and economy we may lay by sufficient to maintain ourselves in a reputable manner ;—in the practical persuasion that it is not greater splendour, higher estimation, or a more abundant fortune—but the perfect performance of our duty, which obtains for us the esteem of good men ;—in the assurance that though every station has its disadvantages, it is in our power to lessen them—if we will but live with prudence, forbearance, and propriety.

By this, however, it is not meant, that we should not improve our condition, when we can do so in a becoming manner, or that we should refuse em-

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ployments, honours, advantages, or profits, if a favourable opportunity for securing them present itself; or that we should give ourselves no trouble to increase our wealth and consideration, and to widen our sphere of action. For that would be to despise the appropriate means by which we may be more useful, not less to others than ourselves, and may promote their welfare as well as our own.— But for the sake of the better portion, which we have not yet obtained, to despise and reject the lesser, which we actually do possess, is indeed folly. Whence comes it then that so many men are dissatisfied with that which the mercy of God has bestowed upon them? And, more particularly, why are so many in the present day discontented either with their domestic lot, or with their public station?

This is not unfrequently the ill-consequence of the prejudice and selfishness of parents, or of those who compel young people to embrace a profession for which they have neither talent nor inclination. Parents and instructors stand towards their children in the stead of God—their duty it is to bring up those who are entrusted to their care in a station in which they can earn their livelihood without the help of others. But it is, therefore, our duty to make proof, with the most tender caution, of the abilities, qualifications, and inclinations of the

child, before the decision be given which is to determine the fate of his whole life. Certainly young persons are not in general competent to choose a future calling for themselves—they have neither experience enough, nor do they always rightly calculate their own powers. It is true, also, that means and opportunities often fail the best of parents, when they are willing to put their children into a profession for which they show a particular ability and inclination. But it is enough if young people be not by any means forced into a line of life to which they show a decided aversion; and in which they have, therefore, no prospect of making themselves happy.

Besides, there are not wanting, alas! instances of persons who have been sacrificed to the interested views, or the vanity of their parents and guardians. Such persons should reflect, that their fate is now for ever fixed, and that although it be not according to their wishes, they still, as Christians, should submissively and courageously meet, support, and improve it, in the best manner they are able.—Custom reconciles us to that which at first appeared intolerable; and every situation, every station, has its peculiar charms and attractions. That which may not and cannot now be our principal occupation, may perhaps sweeten our private leisure hours. Our merit before God and man is so much the

greater in proportion as we conquer ourselves—as we are beneficent, useful, and exemplary even in a station which does not suit our inclinations. There is a God,—there is a futurity,—there is a recompense! And you who were faithful in a little, and knew how to employ well even the inferior lot which has fallen to you, may assuredly rejoice. God will raise you to a sphere of action better adapted to your powers. (MATT. xxv. 21.)

Another and far more common cause of men's being discontented with their station, is a *secret pride and ambition*, which nothing can satisfy. Not only the deficiencies of their situation, but their own imperfections render them unhappy. Short-sighted people! instead of getting rid of their inward failings, they would wish only to change their public rank. If they stood upon a throne the adder of vanity would sting them even there. Wherefore do you pray so fervently, and carry into the presence of God your vain and foolish wishes? Shall the Most High be the minister of your frivolous desires, and shall He change the wise order of the world to accommodate your selfish plans? Perhaps it afflicts you to be mistaken and neglected—perhaps your feelings dictate that you have more ability, more knowledge, more experience, more merit, than many others who with better luck are placed above you. Well—that

may be true. But are you the only one who is neglected by fortune? Have you chosen the right way to improve your prospects? Are you the best, the most distinguished in your rank? Is your ambition, which teaches you to envy others, really honourable to yourself?

If you cannot possess the better gifts of fortune, why are you discontented with the good ones which have been your portion, even in your present state? If a glorious ambition animate you, you will prefer being the first, the most eminent, of your calling, to being an ordinary, or perhaps, the last member of another class. If your feelings with regard to your own merits do not deceive you, then thank your Creator that you are worthy of a better lot than that which you have reached; and envy not him who is above you, but is not deserving of the preference. Know—there beats many a royal heart under the meanest clothing! and the purple of sovereignty has decked many a worthless man. But before the better part of the world, and the exalted eye of God, a man is estimated according to his intrinsic value, not according to his garments or his rank. Love your station, and make it honourable by your intelligence and merit—no station can of itself do honour to you.

Again, others are discontented with their condition, because *they see in it no prospect of amassing*

greater wealth. They wish for riches, that they may purchase pleasures with them, and that they may excite attention in the world. You who are dissatisfied—remember that you have found a livelihood heretofore; and that your station is not designed to afford more than will provide what is needful to your hand, and maintain you and your family in your proper rank. God has called us all to happiness, but has not given to all equal means of temporal enjoyment. He it was who created high and low, rich and poor, master and servant, in order that they might assist each other. If others are richer than you, are they therefore more happy? If others are richer than you, are you not, again, richer than many others who are starving in the deepest misery? Can you yourself wish that one man should be as wealthy as another? And wherefore do you covet for yourself that preference; and not for others who have still less than you? Are you more worthy of it than the rest? It may happen that your gains diminish, although you work willingly. War and scarcity may injure you—yet the industrious man never comes to absolute ruin. If you had not enough in bad times, then it was probably your own fault that you had not in prosperous days saved up for the unprosperous. You smart now for former thoughtlessness. If you had not enough, perhaps your expenditure was

to be blamed. You would do as much as others—perhaps more. It is not your station but your want of economy and domestic order which has reduced you to want. But good as well as bad days come from the Lord God. O Christ, teach me to use them both with wisdom! “The Lord preserveth all them that love Him.” If He give you no great earthly good, He grants you many pleasures which you could not enjoy without Him. Learn to be contented; and you will be rich—and yet not use all that your station or calling earns.

Many an one is discontented with his external situation, because *it places him in contact with persons who are hateful to him* on account of their dissimilar ways of thinking. They, perhaps, embitter his life by their unkindness, by their ill-temper, by their pride, or by their hatred. It may be so. Yet you who murmur at these circumstances, should be just, also, in admitting the advantages which even this your lot affords. Forget not that it has obtained for you many agreeable acquaintances which you would not have gained without it; that it has procured you many friends whom you would not have known. Behold—thus it is, that evil is always countervailed by good.

And, lastly, be honest towards yourself; and those who are opposed to you. Have you already done every thing to turn away their enmity?—

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Have you already made the attempt to vanquish them by magnanimity? Are you not yourself, perhaps, by your carriage towards them, the occasion of their coldness, of their unfriendly feeling towards yourself? Are you so?—Accuse then your *folly*, your *weakness*, your *heart*,—and not your *station*. You yourself have been the author of that, which is most unpleasant in your circumstances. It depends upon yourself alone to alter it, and with prudence to pluck out the thorns which surround the rose. If you cannot do it now, you will not be able to do it in any other station.

It is, moreover, a very common failing with men, not to be sufficiently convinced, that every state, every calling, every condition of life, has its good attributes as well as bad. We are apt only to see the glittering exterior of the thing we wish for, but not its hidden defects; we observe not that we are quite as much envied by some who are ignorant of the inconveniences of our situation, as we envy others whose secret burdens do not press upon our shoulders.

We torment ourselves, therefore, as foolishly as vainly, by discontentment with our station—we prove by this fault how little we know the world—we show how much our heart, if not our station, is capable of improvement; how little regard we have to the Providence of God; how little we are

true followers of that blessed Jesus, who became great through virtue, exalted through humility.

Man has no worse persecutor on earth than himself. No other individual can bring upon us so much pain, as we frequently bring on ourselves, through our own foolish inclinations, through our secret vices, or through the faults which we are rash enough to discover to the world.

Look at the man who is not satisfied with his station—whom his calling disgusts—who hates his lot in life ; how he inflicts upon himself with his own hand a thousand torments, without obtaining any pity for his foolishness. He has not courage enough to become master of himself, and to cast off the sin of discontent ; he is therefore unhappy, and it is through his own senselessness that he continues so.

His morose manners, his unfriendly aspect, banish cheerfulness from his presence, and offend those who must associate with him. He wearies us with his complaining, with his constant abuse of every thing that happens to him. His ambition and vanity will involuntarily be betrayed to the world in all he does ; and the world despises him, whom it cannot honour ; it derides him, who might by true modesty and unfeigned humility have drawn to himself the love and esteem of all.

He is dissatisfied with his station or profession,

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because it does not gratify his inclination for state and splendour. We see the fool, how he makes an expenditure beyond his power, how he ruins himself; whilst he might, with quiet contentment, enjoy the purest pleasures of life : how he himself, through his thoughtlessness, vitiates the good which his station would afford him.

His wishes, his inclinations, all rise above the duties of his calling—he therefore neglects his duties, because his heart is not in them. He becomes unfit for the work, which his station imposes on him. He gives just cause of suspicion against himself; and we doubt his usefulness in more important and weightier business, since he has not shewn himself competent in lesser things.

O my Eternal Heavenly Father ! Thou author of all ranks and orders ! Thou giver of riches and of poverty ! Thou who castest kings from their thrones,—who drivest princes to wander as beggars among strange people—and who raisest the lowly from the ground—I entreat Thee not for riches and honours, not for authority and power ; but only for a contented heart—a heart which trusts in Thy wise, Thy never-failing Providence !

The station which Thou hast assigned me in the world is sufficient, so long as I am temperate, to give me all that I require ; it is sufficient to afford me and my family many a joyful hour. So will I

then, with silent thankfulness, enjoy what through Thy will I now possess, and not childishly destroy that gift which is in my grasp. I will rest contented with the good, when the better fails me. For who knows how long I shall live? Who knows, whether I should long enjoy what I wish for, when at length I have attained it.

Although my station has its discomforts, which I cannot avoid by any foresight or good intentions, custom will at length reconcile me to them. To make my contentment really lasting, I will habituate myself to think more of the actual advantages of my situation, than of the disadvantages. I will make this obvious to my friends and household at every opportunity. Thus will evil lose its sharpest sting, when I am less sensible to its poignancy. Thus will my mind be continually serene, while it sustains the cares of life, and fulfils the duties of my calling. Thus shall I be able to render life delightful to me—in the circumstances in which I stand, be they what they may.

Naked and poor I came into the world—poor and naked I shall leave it: I shall take nothing with me but the witness of a good conscience, that in every station of my life I have been upright and useful—after the example of my Divine Instructor Jesus. Oh! for this treasure which never

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shall diminish, for this blessing which will remain to me throughout eternal ages, let me perpetually strive. To this purpose, bless my endeavours, my cares, O God, for the sake of Jesus and Thy love. Amen.

VI.

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

1 THESS. v. 17.

"Pray without ceasing."

HE who prays, when out of the fulness of his heart, his mouth speaketh to the Infinite Allwise Jehovah, is employed in the most solemn and sublime performance of his life. It is no earthly business; it is heavenly occupation. He passes from the realms of transitoriness into the kingdom of the Spirit—to his true home; and he makes use of the highest of all privileges that can be granted to an inhabitant of the earth—communication with the Most Holy, the Most High.

All pray.—Not the Christian alone, but also the poorest savage on the banks of the unknown Indian stream, humbles himself before God. Although he directs his word of prayer only to images of stone, or to the stars of heaven, his sigh is duly estimated by the unfathomable Spirit who rules the world, who controls the race of mortals, and

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their fate. The heart of the savage is full of religion, although his understanding be enveloped in deepest darkness.

He who prays with fervent devotion, and with deep humility, raises his hands, and eyes, and soul to God, presents a sight which must affect even the most dissolute, and infuse into his mind a sacred reverence for the Deity. He is constrained to acknowledge : ‘ This man is better and greater than I.’

All pray :—and this necessity of the human soul to go back to the Source of its existence, is to be considered as a record of its higher extraction, and of its higher destiny in a future state.

The wisest of men pray ; for in their breast the longing after an union with God is found to be the strongest. The old man prays ; for to him God has more clearly revealed Himself in the wonderful occurrences of life. The king prays :—however the venal tongue of a flatterer may commend him, the tongue which would scarcely name him, if no crown and ensign of authority adorned his brow, he himself perceives his infirmities in the clearest manner. In the midst of the borrowed splendours of his majesty his heart warns him : ‘ Thou art mortal,—thou art full of sins ; and many an one of thy subjects is more pious, more noble, more pleasing to God than thou.’ The vivacious youth

prays—when from the noise of dissipation he passes to the solitude and stillness of night. He sees through the blossoms of the season of youth, the approaching thunder-clouds of future days; and trembles at the uncertainty of his strength. He holds fast by God : he knows no friend who is more faithful,—no father who is more loving,—no protector who is more mighty. The rough warrior prays—who sleeps in the evening on his blood-stained arms. It was not these arms, but Providence which shielded him. He goes forth to his fearful calling :—only a moment, and his bloody corpse may lie by the side of other dead. The mother prays,—in the midst of her affectionate children : God gave her these delights of life ; God can take them away,—“Blessed,” she exclaims, “be the name of the Lord.” The profligate prays—with late contrition in his painful sickness. The hour-glass warns him that this life is no eternity !—and in the mirror he sees an apparition which is like himself. He shudders, even with abhorrence of his guilt, when he reflects on the senseless trifling away of his past life,—on his former scornful derision of the practice of true Christians. The mourning widow prays—on the coffin of her beloved spouse. The world is now a desert to her. She has lost her best temporal possession—yet God remains, and a holy hope which perishes not in

the grave. The philanthropist prays—when he hastens out from the performance of his good deeds to deduce new motives to beneficence from the sight of the beauties of universal nature, and deeply affected by the magnificence of creation, is sensible of a tear of emotion in his eye.

Only one stands there unmoved, as if he had in his breast a heart of stone; and regards with a proud smile, or with vacant wonder, the praying world; and asks: ‘Why do they pray?’—‘for,’ says he, ‘if God be an omniscient God, he knows what is wanting to us—if He be an all-wise God, He knows better than we what is useful to us—if He be an all-bounteous God, He awaits not our prayer, but gives us what is expedient, without our asking Him. Wherefore, then, do you pray?’

So speaks the grovelling sceptic.

But with just as much seeming reason do Christians, who would choose to be taken for any thing but despisers of God, or unchristian people, not unfrequently seek to extenuate their levity, their want of reflection on God, their evil and planless life. They have often ingenuity enough to promote scepticism, in order that they may excuse themselves in their own eyes; but they want courage and power and will to perceive the futility of such excuses.

Why should I pray?

Not for the sake of God ; for God stands not in need of your prayer—nor of your praise, nor of your thanks. And although you neglect Him—although you are absorbed in your own fancied worth, and enjoy His manifold gifts, like the beasts which partake of them, without acknowledging the Giver—although you should have entirely forgotten Him, He, notwithstanding, will remember you. For He is good and merciful.

Not for the sake of God,—not for the purpose of telling Him what you need, what you have to fear, or what you wish. “*He knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.*” (MATT. vi. 8.) He is omniscient !

Not for the sake of God—in order to inform Him what will be most advantageous to yourself ; not to give Him counsel :—for He, before whose eye the present, the future, and the past lie open—He only knows what is best for poor helpless mortals, under all circumstances and relations. He is infinite wisdom !

Not for the sake of men--in order that they may esteem you a true Christian, a good citizen, an upright father of a family—an exemplary son. Miserable man, you who pray that you may be seen of men, without giving heed to the importance and dignity of prayer—you are no better than a wicked hypocrite, who would make a traffic

of religion with the Most Holy, and would degrade the Deity Himself into an instrument of your worthless designs. The awful words which Jesus once uttered over the praying Pharisees, are pointed not less at you.

Not for the sake of custom—because all pray—because you as a child learnt to pray—because time out of mind you have been in the habit of saying a certain prayer at certain hours of the day—because you would, no doubt, retain the practice of your parents and ancestors, although you have so shamefully misunderstood its object. Your *customary* prayer is no prayer that is acceptable with God. Your customary prayer is an empty soul-less form of words, which issues from the lips into the air, and vanishes in air. Use not your customary prayer, and spare yourself that fruitless trouble, which is not pleasing to God, and dishonours you. Do you venture to babble to your earthly superiors, to your lords, your princes, or even to your equals, words in which there is no sense, and the utterance of which you accompany by no corresponding thought? How then! do you venture to draw nigh in the spirit to the throne of the Omnipotent; and to utter words without thinking of their substance?

“*When ye pray,*” saith Jesus, “*use not vain repetitions, as the Heathens do, for they think they*

shall be heard for their much speaking." (MATT. vi. 7.) No ; it is only the prayer which flows from the innermost depths of a heart warmed with devout emotions ; it is only such a prayer as this which penetrates the heavens.

Wherefore should I pray ?

For your own sake, and that you may experience the blessed unearthly *power of prayer*.

The most noble of men, the most discerning, the most enlightened of mortals remains, so long as his spirit dwells in this fabric of dust, a weak and perishable creature. It is impossible for him to preserve himself for ever, or even for long, in that elevated tone of mind to which, in certain hours, his sublime perceptions, and his high principles exalt him—principles which are free from all earthly mixture. He always at length sinks back into his former state, and leans and supports himself again on human customs ; he becomes again, as it were, a child in spiritual things—and what is he to his heavenly Father, but a child ?

He has need to turn his thoughts to God ; it is necessary for him to hold intercourse, and to occupy himself, with the Most High. He cannot be happy unless his mind be filled with reverence for the wise and good providence of the Eternal. And, as he is now accustomed to speak to his parents, his friends, his protectors—to unburden

his heart to them, although they are informed of his circumstances, although they love him, and would assist him even if he did not ask it—so does he address himself in silent, faithful, child-like prayer to God. He offers up one thought, full of reverence to the Ruler of the universe, one low sigh to the Giver of all good and perfect things. *This is prayer.*

The Omniscient knows these thoughts, hears these sighs ; for what is it that can be hidden from the infinite all-perfect God, who fills the whole universe with his Spirit, who gives motion to the dust in the sunbeam, and to the most distant stars ! What is concealed from Him ?

But reflection on the divine greatness, which is never more active in us than during the time of prayer, inspires us with more lively confidence. Prayer opens to us, as it were, the gates of the world of spirits, of which we are already half inhabitants. We approach nearer to the Divinity, and feel as if we belonged to Him. We raise ourselves, through prayer, above vain and transitory things ; and become greater and even more godly. The conviction that we can never be annihilated, gains strength within us. We discriminate more clearly the temporal from the eternal—the appearance from the reality—we see the whole world in another light. The great globe appears under our

feet, only as a little step in the immeasurable field of creation—we see through the endless distance of the starry heavens only a small portion of the Temple of the Most Holy; and glow with transport at being considered, through the grace of God, worthy to be called inhabitants of those heavenly dominions.

Cheerful hope trembles through our nerves. A celestial joy pervades our frame. *This is the power of prayer.* This is the effect of approach to God. No one holds communion with God, without enlightening and improving his own mind.

When a grateful child kisses the hand of its father or its mother, it expresses the finest feelings in the most natural manner. God created me, and assigned me the common lot of mortality—why should I soar above the nature which He has given me, and not worship Him in a purely human mode, full of child-like affection? Should His mercy vouchsafe me at some future time to attain to a greater perfection, then shall I be able to adore Him, like an angel, like a seraph, like the inmate of a brighter world, in a different, a more noble, a more worthy manner. But I am a man,—I am in His eyes only a stammering child—O ye mockers, let me honour my Creator, my Father, like a child, with infantine simplicity. He hears this prattle, and knows the meaning of the devout

tear which escapes from my eager eyes, when they are raised towards Him. Thus the loving, tender mother understands even the first smile of her unconscious babe.

When I give myself up entirely to God in prayer, I feel myself as it were a child resting on the bosom of his father. I fear no longer any reverse of fortune—for I am with Him. I fear no enemy, for He loves me. I walk through the world with stedfast confidence. *This is the power of prayer.*

And when, full of pious fervour, I would draw nigh to the Most Holy, who permits only the just, the sinless, to approach His glorious presence, then all my past faults, all my rashness, all my sensual propensities, seem to crowd between me and my God. Ah! I wish to address Him, and I am not worthy even to look up to heaven. The sinner mourns at the feet of his compassionate Judge, and supplicates for pardon. He offers fervent vows of a more pious life. They give me new power, new courage, new alacrity. The Lord is not angry—for how can the human passion which we call anger, exist in Divine perfection? No; my sins have been my punishment—it is I who am angry with myself. I bewail myself that I was sinful, unholy, and estranged from God. I seek to regain what was lost. My Saviour has taught me that the All-merciful rejects not the repentant sinner.

And God hears my vows, and the Omniscient is witness that I seriously desire to please Him by the putting away of my iniquities. Loving Him better, I love my brethren more. Prayer has worked out my amendment and sanctification. I become a more pious and virtuous man than I was before. *This is the power of prayer.*

Whoever lives in dissension with his household, relatives, and acquaintance ;—whoever maliciously sets forth the failings of his fellow-men, and enviously detracts from their virtues ;—whoever uses falsehood instead of truth, dishonesty instead of integrity, persecution instead of beneficence, deceit instead of honourable dealing—he has not prayed to any purpose. To pray is to be in and with God ;—but whosoever is in God, walks not in sin.

You pray, my Christian brother, you entreat ; but your entreaties are not always answered. And it is late, often after the lapse of years, before you know how disadvantageous the listening to your wishes would have been. God is more kind towards us than we to ourselves,—because He is wiser than we. But shall we for this reason ask no more of God—shall we, therefore, cease to address our wishes to our Divine Father ? No ; let not this disturb your filial relation to the Deity.

You still believe in a Divine Providence who from eternity foresaw your fate. Well—He knew

your actions,—He foresaw also your necessities at the moment of your prayer, and the disposition of your mind. And He heard your prayers even before you uttered them. You prayed; and to him who prays wisely, the blessing of prayer is granted.

Remember the hours you stood before God with an anxious heart, and cried : ‘ Save me, most merciful Father!’ Remember the hours when all your prospects were dark—and when even on the brink of despair you turned to the one true God in the fulness of Christian faith, and cried : ‘ Never again will my way be clear, if Thou sheddest not Thy light upon the future.’ And behold, circumstances which you did not expect,—occurrences often apparently trifling,—things which men call accidents or misfortunes, saved you, and improved your lot. You are again become happy and prosperous. But in the Divine Creator there is no accident or chance. There is a God eternally merciful and mighty. You have been made sensible of His existence. *This is the power of prayer.*

I was sensible of Thee, my God, my Father, when my soul was much troubled. I felt Thee when the whole world seemed to be dead around me, like a barren waste. I felt Thee when I had no other friend. I perceived Thee when I tottered on the threshold of death. Thou wast present,

Thou remainedst, Thou helpedst me.—Thou didst abundantly care for me, and didst change, with an Almighty hand, circumstances which seemed incapable of change.

Therefore will I not withdraw from Thee as long as I breathe. I will cry to Thee ‘Abba, Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name!’ Therefore will I with child-like confidence cling unto Thee. Thou listenest to my stammering. Thou understandest the meaning of my tears. Thou knowest the secret of my sighs.

Only in Thee, near Thee, with Thee, can I be happy. Without Thee my existence were a nullity; and it would have been better for me that I should not have been born. With Thee heaven is every where—every where is blessedness. I cannot be unfortunate under Thy protection, I am so only when I wander from Thee.

VI.

FAITH AND WORKS.

HEBREWS xi. 16.

*"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly :
wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God : for he
hath prepared for them a city."*

It is extremely perplexing to hear the different opinions which men avow on the subject of religion. Some persons assert with confidence, that our *good deeds* can conduce nothing to salvation ; but that it is *Faith* alone which saves us—that it is sufficient to believe in Jesus crucified, and in His atoning merits, in order to be justified before God through these merits alone:—that even in the hour of death the sinner who only lays hold on the merits of Jesus, is sanctified and saved. Others, again, who no less call themselves Christians, affirm the contrary of all this. They say that Faith does not save, but uprightness of mind and conduct. To them, the profession of Faith is indifferent ; but not so their actions.

Even from the pulpit of Christian churches this

contradiction is sometimes heard. What is preached with the most pious intentions by one minister, another as conscientiously rejects. Whilst this one insists on intensity of Faith as the perfection of true Christianity—another enforces virtuous sentiment and actions, as the substance of the Religion of Jesus Christ.

This variance of ideas must necessarily perplex the common people; and generate separation and uncharitable judgments. The weak become tottering; and obey at last that voice which is more powerful than the words of the disagreeing preachers, the voice of their own natural appetites—of their self-interest. They cease to be religious, and satisfy themselves with mere worldly prudence. They do only what brings them present profit—what gives offence to no one—and leave their future destiny, their eternal state, to the will of their Creator.

When, indeed, I observe the sentiments, lives, and actions of a certain portion of my fellow-men, and especially of those who have enjoyed a more liberal education, who are reckoned of the better informed and more enlightened ranks, I perceive, that a great shyness with regard to every thing that is called *a point of Faith*, is prevalent amongst them. They would rather hear nothing of Faith, they do not let their children know any thing about the

matter. At most, they give permission that their families should be instructed in the Church-Articles of Faith by their appointed spiritual guides—but this is done solely out of regard to character and established customs. They do not wish to make exceptions; but they put no further value on the doctrines of Faith, inculcated on their children. Thus it becomes more and more fashionable to make religion consist in a merely decent and reputable life. One person has, perhaps, discovered in the spiritual system of this or that church ordinances too rigorous—perhaps untenable, exaggerated opinions; and he considers it, therefore, right to set aside all that is connected with matters of Faith. Another calls it useless speculation, empty theological pride, the fruitless religion of the head, hypocrisy; or, when the tenets of any one lead him earnestly to acknowledge its importance—fanaticism, short-sightedness, to which well informed men ought to be superior.

The consequence of this too prevailing way of thinking is, that as little as possible is said to youth on the subject of religion. Men are in some degree ashamed, and blush to speak earnestly of the truths of Christianity. One person leaves it to children to try it for themselves in riper years, to choose and believe what shall appear to them the best—and he even takes this conduct for prudence. Ano-

ther supposes that all is done when his children are formed into sensible, moral, and upright men, who have an aversion for the grosser vices; and where they can show kindness or good will to others, *without any disadvantage to themselves*, would do it with cheerfulness.

Another effect of this widely spread laxity of principle, is—that the public worship of God is despised and omitted. ‘The whole universe,’ it is said, ‘is a Temple of God, and upright conduct is his best service.’ Many a man goes merely from custom into the sacred assembly of Christians; and partakes of the Holy Sacrament in order that he may not appear singular.

So it is—but *I am a Christian*; and the question must not remain indifferent to me. Can it be so? On what have I to decide? Has the great Founder of my religion *needlessly* insisted so often, so loudly, so earnestly, on the apprehension of Faith? Why did he require Faith in order to my future blessedness, if my virtuous conduct, my upright intentions, can already effect this? Why did his disciples demand Faith of all those who were converted to Christianity? Is not then an honest irreproachable life sufficient in itself to make me happy here; and worthy of a better lot hereafter?

No! Jesus and his inspired disciples preached, not without reason, Faith and its saving power.

How foolish, if I were to acknowledge their sublime wisdom in every other case ; and yet consider this one point in their doctrine indifferent or superfluous—for the sake of which, they all went joyfully to death ! Not for the precepts of virtue which the Messiah and his followers delivered ; but for the sublime Faith which they taught, did they suffer death.

“ Without Faith it is impossible to please God ”—so saith the Scripture. *“ He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”* (HEB. xi. 6.)

Were the bare dictates of reason, and a natural sense of duty—and the following of those simple doctrines which are engraved in the heart of man, sufficient to solve all the contradictions of this life, to give consolation to the suffering, and hope to the despairing,—why did Jesus Christ appear ? Had not human reason already been developed, in full power, before Jesus came into the world ? Had not the Heathen, had not Persia, Rome, and Greece, their teachers of morality, and their sages ? Had not the Jews already received the Law of Moses ? But Christ came and was *“ the end of the Law,”* as St. Paul saith, *“ for righteousness to every one that believeth.”* (ROM. x. 4.) *“ A man is justified by Faith, (in the Doctrine of Jesus Christ) without the deeds of*

the (Mosaic) Law.” (Rom. iii. 28.) In what then consists the pre-eminence of Faith? Why is it essential to our salvation? Why are all virtues without Faith insufficient to procure our true felicity?

Oh my heart, hast thou already answered this serious question? Oh you who lay such claim to high cultivation of mind, and an enlightened spirit, have you ever thought attentively on the doctrines of your religion?—of that religion from which you expect peace of mind during life, and consolation at the hour of death?

What are your virtues, your good works, without an inward stedfast Faith in God the Father, in God the “*Rewarder*?” Take, if you can, the evidence of the *Godhead* out of the Book of Creation; and imagine that the idea of *eternity* had never entered the mind of man—what then is the whole universe—what thy life? A fearful, comfortless riddle—a present existence without design and aim,—a spiritless, lifeless clock-work, with regard to which, no one comprehends who has wound it up, and wherefore, according to its internal laws, it goes on so harmoniously. Why do you practise your good works? Why fulfil your duties? Your endeavours are, surely, without design—as well as all the operations of nature. Why do you strive after perfection? There is, surely, no perfection,

no duration, no Eternity ! Why do you sacrifice yourself to your duty ? Death will surely bury for ever the holy man as well as the transgressor ! Your virtue is, surely, mere madness, through which you deprive yourself of the pleasure you might enjoy in this life :—the licentiousness, which is indulged without restraint, and satisfies every desire, must be true wisdom ; for it allows a joyful moment on Earth, and trembles not before any Ruler of the World.

Do you shudder ? do you now perceive the sublimity of that Faith which the Divine Jesus has revealed ? Do you feel now the necessity of a Faith which reconciles all the contradictions of the World—of a Faith which assigns a true worth and an object, to your reason, your virtues, and your duties ? Is the truth clear to you as the Apostle to the Hebrews declared it, “ *He that cometh unto God, must believe that He is* ? ”

Without Faith no true virtue can exist—because virtue is more, must be more, than mere worldly prudence. What is called uprightness or morality is only, in short, a provident behaviour towards the world ; in order that it may tolerate you, or grow fond of you, or may embellish your present existence with fame and pleasure. But those virtues which Jesus Christ requires—virtues which ennoble your spirit, must be exercised inde-

pendently of worldly motives. When the practice of them is connected with the most difficult sacrifices—when no mortal observes them—they must still be performed with equal zeal and perseverance. But without Faith such a disposition of soul cannot be matured. Without Faith in the revelation of Eternity and the immortality of the Soul, would such self-sacrificing virtue be accounted foolishness, and a mode of conduct without design or end. Without Faith we see persons deck themselves outwardly with all the colours of virtue, but wear in secret the dark shades of vice. Whoever has not the fear of an all-seeing eye, may well despise the scrutiny of mortals.

Go—disregard the religious Faith of your children, and satisfy yourselves with making honour and uprightness dear to them. But forget not how weak all principles of honour are against the strong stream of passion. Remember how often you have been, each in your own course, unfaithful to your best resolutions. Pardon your children, when they are decent in externals, but inwardly unclean, where your eye cannot penetrate :—forgive them if they openly honour you and fulfil your commands, but in secret despise you—and privately, when they need not fear you, renounce their obedience.

These are the inevitable effects of an education

without religion—of recommending *virtue* on any other ground than that of *Faith*.

Faith alone sanctifies! not the bare will of reason—which is far too weak to encounter the storm of rebellious passions. Faith sanctifies—that is to say—the conviction of our calling to a high destiny—the conviction of a recompense beyond the grave is alone capable of rendering our virtue something more than mere worldly prudence—of preserving our heart from sin when we are secure from the observation of other men—of keeping alive our generosity, and of proving our rectitude, even when on account of our good deeds we have to submit to reproach and contempt and persecution.

This is *the power of Christian Faith*, which it exercises over our hearts every where, and at all times. What are our best deeds without it? Fair fragments of a good will, without any firm connection. Hence the wise and virtuous among the ancients, even before the advent of Jesus Christ, were not quite without the light of Faith. Still in those cases in which *we* say with confidence: “I hope—I know”—*they* had only dark forebodings and doubtful wishes. But this shadow of Faith induced them to practise with rigour those virtues which they taught publicly, as well as privately,—even if it were necessary to renounce all

the pleasures of life, and to devote themselves to perils and to death.


Oh Christians, partakers of that Revelation of saving Love, which was imparted to us by Jesus Christ, shall even the Heathen have had and exercised more Faith than you, who might vie with the wise ones of former ages in mental cultivation and enlightened faculties ? Christians, partakers of the heavenly illumination ; shall the Heathen have been more holy in mind than you ?

Without Faith there is no consolation here below. All your virtues avail you not in hours which are big with fate—when poverty, sickness, and misery of every kind, break in upon you—and when mistaken and mocked by your miserable scheme, you are cast away in terror and despair. Only Faith in a wise Providence who governs the course of the world and of the human race—only Faith in that eternal goodness which does not desire that any created beings should become a prey to misery—only Faith in a recompensing hand beyond the grave, can raise the sinking soul, when every thing conspires to bow us down.

Go to the coffin of your father or your child, of your mother or your wife—you who are destitute of Faith—and ask yourself what may mitigate your hopeless grief. What ?—your morality ? Alas, it

will not restore to you the beloved dead. Their last sorrowful smile—their last dying look—their last languid pressure of the hand, was, surely, according to your ideas, separation for ever? No light from Eternity has irradiated the darkness of your life. No rewarding God takes account of your tears, in order that at some future time they may be repaid with joy. Man without Faith! where is your comfort? Why have you loved any one of mortal mould, if you loved only for the dream of a transitory life!

And as to yourself—if ever your vigour fail, and an ungrateful family dishonour your grey hairs, and you be vexed with the infirmities of old age, you will see nothing more before you*than a last painful day—and the grave. Man without Faith!—will these your virtues console you, if you have long since seen all their good effects, which you supposed to have been firmly established, going to destruction? What will refresh you, when the horror of death falls upon your body, and your mind at last retains all your laborious life less than the recollection of a dream? Man without Faith!—just on the threshold of the vault into which you are descending, the wish for something higher, will be ardent; and the sigh after an eternal existence, deep! Just when the river of your life



has well nigh flowed away, will you feel a thirst for Faith,—that you may not die without consolation and refreshment.

And, at last, what is the amount of all your virtue ? How, presumptuous man ! do you boast of being able to purchase Heaven by good works, and through your own earning to gain eternal happiness ? Poor mortal ! you whose childhood passed in a thousand follies—whose maturity of age was blighted by a thousand impetuous passions, polluted by a thousand sins—whose grey hair at length ingloriously covers the weakness of later years—dare you make a show with your virtue before the Judge of life ? dare you talk of any merit whatever before the Most Holy—in whose sight nothing is pure ? Were you always free from sin ? Have you never need of pardon and compassion ?

Not through our merit—not through our virtue, may we stand before God ; but only through the grace of the Most Merciful. Our innocence will not save us—but Faith in Jesus—Faith in Revelation—Faith in the mercy of our Father who is in Heaven.

Arise then, my spirit, and cleave to this Faith—it is that which strengthens thy virtue, and preserves it—it is that which sanctifies thee—it is that which saves thee. Through Faith alone is true elevation of soul attainable ; without it, none.

Thou Thyself, Jesus, my Divine Saviour, Thou

Thyself saidst this: "*He that believeth in me, the works that I do, shall he do also.*" (JOHN xiv. 12.)

Who without Faith in Thee can obtain that perfection of soul which glorifies Thy name?

Hence, vain pride of virtue—foolish reliance on our own powers—I know thy nothingness! Were I even of all mortals the most noble and the best, still should I be before God without righteousness or merit—an unholy being which must vanish before the Most Holy God. Hence, false notion, that my virtue alone will soothe me in that anxious hour, when the world and mankind shall leave me comfortless! Alas! what is the virtue of mortals? A fragile reed shaken by the wind. Ten sins are committed, before I bring my mind to perform one deed pleasing to God.

Jesus, Thy Faith exalts, strengthens, sanctifies me! I find health and salvation in no one but Thee! I find no light but in Thy revelation;—I find no sanctification except in Thy blood, which was shed for our redemption. It is only the conviction of our unworthiness, and a contemplation of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, as well as of the grace of God manifested in Him, which can improve our imperfect virtue.

And in this Faith will I persevere unto the end. It is the origin of my best hopes. It is the spring of my comfort—when, at the view of the Divine

Majesty, I tremble under the sense of my own unworthiness; it is the source of my piety and uprightness before God and man; it is the guard over my heart in the hour of temptation. Father of Eternal Love—Father of Mercies—all my endeavours to be perfect as Thou art perfect, are in vain! I am a sinful man, and should yield to despair if Thou didst not dispense mercy instead of justice. Ah! let me, even in my unworthiness, find mercy before Thee—let me also one day, when my course is finished, hear the consoling words “**THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE.**” Amen.

VII.

WORKS AND FAITH.

JAMES ii. 14—17.

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

THE longer I meditate, in peace and solitude, on the momentous truth—that man is blessed only through the faith which Jesus taught—the clearer and more tranquillizing to my mind does it become.

It is true, I often imagine to myself that genuine Christianity does not depend so much on faith as on practice. Since, however, I perceive that with all my endeavours after a perfect life, I still remain very imperfect in the eyes of God;—that I never advance so far as to be thoroughly holy, that is, free from every offence and fault; I find no consolation except through faith in Divine Mercy.

I am more and more firmly convinced, that the faith of the Christian is alone the prop of his virtue—because he is upheld by it from stumbling, at times when no strange eye observes him, and he might transgress with impunity the laws of man. But looking up to the Omniscient, to *the* REWARDER, the recollection of eternity restrains him from secret sins. Yet more—it is but too certain that there are moments when cool reflection is suspended; when in the fire of sensual passions the best intentions are dissolved; when the remembrance of the ties of duty is no longer sufficient to bind us down to virtue. Then the weak mortal needs a strong support to prevent his falling, and becoming the prey of a sinful propensity, of which he will afterwards, perhaps, in vain repent. And this support, this protection against the force of temptation, is his *Faith*. When his reason is subdued, this will yet deliver him.

If I do good, shall I not do it in order to obtain an earthly or a heavenly reward? Such a motive were no virtue, but mere selfishness. Moreover I perceive that with all my upright conduct, I must always stand as a sinner before God, and can have merited nothing at His hands. I should, then, lose the courage to be virtuous, if faith in God and eternity did not strengthen and confirm me. For if there were no God, no everlasting existence to be

expected by me, all the sacrifices which I make for the benefit of my soul, all the sufferings which I undergo for the sake of virtue, were a mere folly. I should do far better, were I born only for this short span of life, to take care to spend my few days here below as pleasantly as I might. Wherefore should I adorn my soul with virtues, if it, like the body, shall perish in the grave?

Hence the declaration which Jesus made, becomes perfectly clear to me: "*He that believeth . . . shall be saved.*" Ah! I feel it: without this faith there is no tranquillity, no comfort, no peace, no hope, no blessedness. By this, Christ having obtained for us the "Great Salvation," leads us to His eternal kingdom. No good works—even the deeds of an angel—can of themselves alone exalt to such a state of bliss.

But whilst I acknowledge the wondrous, saving power of Faith, I must not deny the worth of Virtue. Virtue without faith is sowing without reaping; but faith without virtue is a barren, fruitless tree.

Those, therefore, act unwisely and contrary to the doctrine of Jesus Christ, who treat all good deeds as useless, and direct our attention to faith alone. They imagine that a virtuous course conduces little to salvation; that by faith alone we are justified before God; that the blood of Jesus, and His merits, or the intercession of the saints, will alone

cleanse us from sin—if we have lived ever so profligate a life. Woe to those who hold such doctrine! They are zealous opposers of that Jesus, whose servants they desire to be esteemed;—they tread under foot the divine word, which they undertake to interpret; they pave the way to human perdition, and become murderers of souls. “*What doth it profit,*” says the apostle St. James, (ii. 14. 26.) “*what doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*”

And yet unhappily the opinion has become very prevalent, that it is sufficient for the salvation of the soul, if a man only believe in the Triune God, in the reconciling death of the Son Jesus Christ, in the power of prayer; and observe with pious zeal all the church rites which are connected with public worship. Very far from subduing their passions—their propensity to anger, to lust, to covetousness, to intemperance, to envy and to other sins, men sometimes indulge themselves in these crimes in the firm confidence that Christ has done more than enough to remove their guilt; and that it is sufficient to believe on Him, in order to obtain forgiveness of all such transgressions. They pray regularly to God; and,

with all their pretended holiness, hate or defraud their neighbour. They go constantly to Church, and to the altar, in order that they may return with so much the freer heart to the indulgence of their ungoverned appetites, their ambition, their avarice—to envy their brother, and scandalize their sister. They give alms to the beggar, but oppress the unfortunate, defraud and overreach those with whom they have any dealings, and appropriate to themselves the goods of other people.

This is not Christianity ; it is a wicked abuse of that which is most holy. ‘ Not by their profession of faith shall ye know those who belong to me,’ saith Jesus to His disciples, ‘ but by their fruits.’ “ *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*” (MATT. vii. 21.)

Such wrong and ruinous ideas of the alone-saving power of faith, and of the little worth of virtue, arise sometimes out of a misunderstanding of particular passages of Scripture ; at other times out of the inconsiderate zeal of such preachers, as suppose that they must preach only, and without intermission, on matters of faith, in order to prevent the decay of vital Christianity. These short-sighted people do not consider, that virtuous men are more inclined to religion than wicked men—

they do not consider, that if, by proper instruction and explanation of their duties, men be led to do the will of God, they will then also be more disposed to cultivate in their own hearts faith in Jesus and His word. They consider not that those to whom their duties are less clear than the doctrines of their faith, will neglect their moral obligations; indulge themselves without restraint in their pleasures and extravagances; and at last, when every thing holy seems indifferent, learn to despise the dead faith they have professed, together with those who, in pious but ignorant simplicity, taught them to embrace it.

We must not be astonished, therefore, at the decline of sound religion which is observable in some towns and villages. It proceeds in the lower classes less from their supposed enlightenment, than from deterioration of morals and corruption of heart. For, as it is impossible that there should be true virtue without faith, so it is equally impossible that there should be any true faith without rectitude of mind and manners.

But it is easier for men *to believe* than *to do*. Hence so many are found who say “*Lord, Lord,*” but so few who fulfil the will of our heavenly Father. For the apprehension of faith in revealed truths, a well-disposed heart is required—a heart willing to submit to the practical doctrines of that

faith. For the leading of a pure and virtuous life before God, not only is an inclination of the heart to perform the will of the Most High absolutely required ; not only a conviction of the greatness and importance of the duties which we have to perform towards God and man,—but self-controul, the repression of our vicious habits, and most cherished desires and humours—the total change of our blameable modes of thinking and of acting. But how can a barren, unfruitful faith save us ? How can it accomplish the object of Jesus—that we should be made better men, more pious and more charitable ?

You say, ‘ I believe in God, and love Him.’ But how then can you hate your brother ? Wherefore, when your brother has been guilty of a fault towards you, do you breathe vengeance against him ? Is this the will of Jesus, your Master ? You say, ‘ I believe in Jesus Christ.’ Wherefore are you not His follower in all your thoughts and works ? Why do you give the reins to your passions, instead of curbing them ?—as He, the Holy One, has taught and commanded. You say, ‘ I believe in an eternal life.’ Wherefore then do you not prepare yourself beforehand to attain in it a happier lot ? Why do you not tremble before the just Judge of the dead ? Why do you live as if you were never to cease to exist in this world—as if


there awaited you no grave, no judgment. “*Thou believest,*” saith St. James, (ii. 19.) “*that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*”

Whoever expects through faith alone to become just before God, and confiding in the merits and sufferings of Christ, or in the intercession of the saints, leads a sinful course of life—he makes Jesus an abettor of extravagance and vice; and the saints, the guardian angels of iniquity. How could Satan himself, if he had to walk on earth, more abominably abuse the religion of the Lord? How could those holy beings, who were glorified on account of their sublime virtues, become the advocates of sensuality and murder, of deceit and malice, of theft and slander? How! did Jesus appear on earth to be made an instrument of sin;—that whilst we allow ourselves to commit every kind of bad action, we may expect His merits to atone for all;—that notwithstanding our guilt, we should, at length, escape with impunity, because He has suffered for us? Be not deceived: God is not mocked. Christ has promised eternal life to such as believe in Him. But *to believe in Him means to live as blameless and as full of love as He.*

“*If ye love me,*” saith our blessed Lord, “*keep my commandments.*” (JOHN xiv. 15.)

But He commands not that man should live according to his carnal will—that each one should abandon himself to the suggestions of his anger, his impurity, his frivolity, his avarice, or his hard-heartedness—in the hope that he shall eventually be acquitted of all his sins, for the sake of the merits and propitiatory death of the Redeemer. He insists rather on an exalted and inward charity; on a placable disposition and veracity; on faithfulness and chastity; on the subduing of our favourite evil propensities. “*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits shall ye know them.*” (MATT. vii. 19, 20.)

This same false Christianity must necessarily become the source of great immorality; whilst true Christianity should be the source of all virtues and perfections. ‘There is yet time enough for me to be pious,’ says this man, ‘wherefore should I cease to do what makes me happy? Did not Christ die for me? Has He not made satisfaction for me?’ ‘I will put an end to my excesses,’ says that man, ‘when I am older, and my blood is more cold and quiet. I will leave off amassing wealth by means which are not strictly honest, and become just in my dealings—when I have gotten enough of riches for my purpose. I will forgive all my enemies; no more oppress or calumniate:—I will stand well



with all men—when I have first satisfied my ambition, and brought myself sufficiently into notice. I acknowledge that the mode of thinking and acting which I have hitherto pursued, is not according to the intention of Jesus—not according to the will of God. But I pray, therefore, the more diligently—am seldom absent from Church—give alms; and what can I do more? I remain still a wicked, sinful man. I cannot become a saint on earth. God is compassionate, and He will pardon all my misdeeds, for the sake of Christ His Son,—if only in my last hours I reserve time enough to repent, and receive the Holy Sacrament, and recommend my soul to the pity of the most merciful and gracious Lord.'

Are not such thoughts as these a contempt of the sufferings of our Redeemer? Will not religion itself be made by such means a mere pretence, and a support of wickedness? Is not this the crime of apostasy—is it not of the same nature as the sin against the Holy Ghost, which cannot be forgiven, though all other sins find pardon. In this case must not the most hardened criminal, who has stained his life with disgraceful acts, be considered happier than the virtuous imitator of Jesus? For the former, before he is dragged to the place of execution, in order that he may receive from the sword of the civil magistrate the reward of his

misdeeds, knows the number of his last hours, and amidst the awful preparations for his death, has time sufficient to pray, to bewail his sins, and to receive the sacrament;—whilst the most pious, the most righteous follower of Jesus, often dies suddenly and unexpectedly.

This false Christianity, this fruitful heresy, invented as a plea for revelling in sin with the greater freedom—this trust in faith without works, has at the same time ever been the source of religious hatred. By placing all worth in faith and none in deeds, various religious parties have been led to persecute each other with rancorous cruelty. They looked only to the opinions, not to the heart; only to faith, not to integrity of mind. Let their neighbour have been ever so blameless, charitable, and useful in his life and conduct, they persecuted him as a criminal worthy of death, because he professed a different form of faith from themselves.

For the honour of God they murdered their brother—for the honour of God they lighted a pile for the innocent—for the honour of God they condemned, injured, and persecuted those who thought differently—for the honour of God they were rapacious, treacherous, and violent.

Ah! the wretched people! They expected to conquer Heaven by their zeal, while their wickedness and transgression destroyed God's creation

upon earth. They expected to please God, whose children they murdered, or plunged into misery ; they expected to sanctify themselves, whilst they assumed the office of executioners ; and refused that mercy and love to others, which they themselves had most need to seek from God ?

These frightful effects of a *rage for faith*, have happily become rare in our days : or rather, through the influence of wise and Christian magistrates,—thanks be to Providence—they have entirely disappeared : on the other hand, that same false Christianity is much revived and supported, which exalts a dead faith, and proportionally disregards the practice of virtue on Christian principles—awakens a dangerous propensity to fanaticism, to a fruitless trifling with the feelings, to false devotion, and to uncharitable judgment of those who hold opinions different from our own on religious subjects. For it is more convenient to an indolent mind to speculate or dream over spiritual matters, than to practise religion ; much more convenient to sigh over a wicked world, than to edify that wicked world by active Christianity, and to animate the virtue of the Christian by a virtuous example : it is easier to acquire a fictitious, and, in some respects, an earthly love of Christ, by exciting one's own feelings and imagination, than to love Jesus in all his brethren, that is, in all mankind with whom we are con-

versant : “ *Whosoever shall do the will of God,*” saith Jesus himself, “ *the same is my brother, and my sister and mother.*” (MARK iii. 35.) Every other love, as being merely a fiction of the mind, which produces not the abjuration of faults, and the practice of virtue, whenever there is opportunity, is closely allied to a fruitless and dead faith.

We should live as if we could be justified only by our works, as if we could earn heaven by our virtue ; and we should die as if we could obtain eternal salvation only through the merits of Jesus Christ, and the mercy of our God. In both these views there is no delusion ; in both is sacred truth. For through faith alone, and without works, we shall not be accounted righteous before God ; and at the same time, with our purest virtue, we can appear only as sinners before the Most Holy—the Omniscient Judge of our words and actions—the Searcher of our secret thoughts.

IX.

IN ONE VIRTUE ALL VIRTUES.

2 PETER i. 5—9.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you, that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things, is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

Few persons have spent upon the improvement of their minds, even half the time, trouble, and reflection, which they have expended at the toilet, on the adorning of their persons ;—or in the house of business, on the increasing of their fortune ;—or on the acquirement of practical arts and sciences ; or on the pursuit of gaiety and diversion. Even those who are by no means entirely indifferent to their inward, moral perfection, and the health of their souls, are accustomed for


the most part to be satisfied with fulfilling punctually their private and public duties ; with being obliging towards their friends, beneficent to the poor, and courteous to strangers ; with attending the Church regularly to perform their Devotions—and then with leaving the rest to chance or the humour of the moment, amidst the whirl of every-day and busy life. They cannot fail, therefore, to make far quicker progress in the ability of gaining a livelihood—or in the polite arts and accomplishments—than in the pious sanctification of their mind. They think that they have done enough for this object, when they can venture to say of themselves, ‘ *I am, at least, not one of the worst !* ’—although it be mere self-love which whispers it ; and notwithstanding they know little of the inward state of those persons, whom they might probably be inclined to consider worse than themselves.

Certainly there come, from time to time, hours of serious self-reflection, when either heavy misfortunes overwhelm them, and they find no other consolation than in God ; or when repentance seizes them, at the sight of the dark train of their various crimes ; or when on their own bed of sickness, or over the coffin of a beloved friend, they feel a horror of eternity. There are hours in which we make pious vows of improvement, and even some happy beginnings to subdue our reigning faults ; to recon-

cile ourselves with enemies ; to restore the property of others, which has been dishonestly retained ; and to manifest a Christian love to all the world. Yet the danger when past, the sickness when cured, the coffin of the friend—are gradually forgotten ; nay, they all sink deeper and deeper into the back-ground of times gone by. We become more easy, at length more indifferent, and, lastly, find ourselves again living in our former carelessness, in our former wavering between good and bad ; and we think that it cannot be altered. We assume many grounds of consolation, which may pass as a sort of excuse for our weakness. ‘ There can be no saints upon earth,’ say we. Conscience, however, that judge in our breast which cannot be bribed, is not quieted by such a plea. It earnestly enough replies : ‘ But have you already endeavoured to be as holy and good, as you might be under your peculiar circumstances ? Have you endeavoured it perseveringly for years ? Can you, before God, abide a reckoning of the exertions, which you have made for this purpose up to the present day ? ’ ‘ The natural corruption of man,’ say we, ‘ is too great.’ But are not the merits of Jesus greater ? Have you already appropriated these merits to yourself by the imitation of Jesus and of his sublime virtues ? “ *But he that lacketh these things,*” says the Divine word, “ *is blind and cannot see afar off, and*

hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

One of the most dangerous and yet most common errors is, when in regard to failings still adherent to us, we seek to console ourselves with the idea that we possess several praiseworthy qualities, which will preserve a balance against all external and casual weaknesses. What reasonable man can in earnest think, that a sin is to be justified in any manner? For is not sin always an infirmity of the soul, even if the latter possess ever so many good qualities besides? When your whole body is sound, except one sick and painfully affected member, would you on account of your good health in other respects, esteem yourself as entirely well? Would you on this account disregard the damaged part, and find the pain of it diminished? But more than this: which are your laudable qualities—which your virtues—that impart to you so much self-satisfaction? You love God, but you hate your brother. Then you are bountiful and useful, but permit yourself sometimes to take even illicit advantages; to replenish the waste of your fortune in a way not entirely honest. You are in company amiable, obliging and assisting to every body, but at home you give vent to intolerable humours, and excite grievous quarrels. You do much good in private, and



without any ambition; but in private too, you strive to undervalue and render him contemptible, who is in any way opposed to you; or in private you seek, without any sense of shame, to indulge your evil inclinations. Can you so grossly deceive yourself with the hope, that these your virtues and these your sins will be of the same weight in the balance at the judgment-seat of God? Can the thief, have he even the best of dispositions in every thing else, by referring to these, induce even an earthly judge to leave him unpunished for his theft? Do not rejoice in your single praiseworthy qualities and deeds so long as you are deficient in the rest—for you are imperfect even in them. *We cannot attain perfection in any one virtue, so long as other virtues are wanting in us*—since that single one has a real existence and is complete only by the existence of all the rest. In every single virtue all collectively hang together, just as the health of the whole body is founded on that of every distinct part. Only examine yourself; and you will soon perceive how little intrinsic value that quality possesses, in which you are supposed to be most perfect. You perhaps think with yourself: ‘I may in many points be faulty; but yet shall no one be able to say of me, that towards my dear children I am not a good and tender father, or a faithful, careful mother; that I do not fulfil all my duties

towards them, even with the sacrifice of my pleasures, and my health.' This may be : but truly, if you are faulty in other things, so are you also wanting in love and fidelity towards your children. You fail towards your children, as often as you give them an example of disdain or anger towards the partner of your life : you fail towards them, as often as you stir up hatred and discord in your house by dissensions with neighbours and acquaintances : you fail towards them, as often as you forget them through drunkenness or gambling,—or commit infidelity and dishonesty in your office or business,—or make yourself enemies through malicious wit,—or dishonour yourself by haughtiness or servility, or by wavering in your principles,—or in any other way degrade that name which you should leave to your children as the best legacy you can bequeath, or they inherit. You love them, but contribute to nothing less than to this—that after death the opinion which men have formed of you may be a blessing to your descendants. Is that a true love of your children ? Oh, deceive yourself no longer, you are yet far from having acquired the virtue, in which you think that you are most perfect. You have only the instinctive feeling, the natural attachment, but not the virtue. That attachment originates in animal nature, and every beast feels an inclination towards its young ; but this—

namely *the virtue*—proceeds from the soul. It is greatly defective, when you allow yourself to fail in other points. For in one virtue all cohere ; if there be an imperfection in some, then do the rest also exist only in a mutilated state.

It is enough to convince us of this truth, that we turn an eye of observation upon the tendencies and properties of mind, which appear to us to be most praiseworthy. You hate falsehood, you honour truth above all things—it is praiseworthy. But, when you strive after the esteem of a person who is dear to you ; and you veil your ambition with humility—hide your sinful disposition with a soft voice—and leave off the custom hitherto indulged of keeping bad company, without relinquishing the longing for it ; when, in order to please, you take pains to appear better than you are in fact : dare you say, that falsehood is an abomination to you ? You are generally esteemed tender-hearted and philanthropic. You think, yourself, that you are so. Possibly you would not do any one an injustice intentionally, much less cause him unhappiness, or even embarrassment. It is very laudable of you. Yet when, at the same time, upon some one favourite inclination,—upon the pleasures of the chase,—upon the entertainment of the card table,—upon the gaiety of the ball-room, and other amusements, you waste a valuable portion of your life, in which,

O philanthropist ! you might do something far more useful for your fellow-men ; or when, on account of these, you neglect the duties of your office, your business, and your household, so that in consequence, other people are the losers ; whilst, O philanthropist ! you expend in little sums, which at the end of the year become important, a considerable amount for superfluous things, for dogs, horses, fashionable articles, and other unnecessary luxuries, when many families in your town or village might yet be relieved, who are not deficient in diligence or will, but only require a loan of money, in order to extricate themselves from want :—are you, while such is the case, a friend to man ? No, no—there is no one virtue complete unless it bloom internally, and be fast bound into the wreath of all the rest !

This investigation of my heart is very comfortless. Yet will I not shrink from it—for it is instructive. It is good that man should learn to know thoroughly his own nature ; that he may be able the more readily to adopt the proper means of improving his condition. I have not hitherto failed in the *will* to adorn myself with every virtue, which may make me well pleasing to God and man, and impart the inestimable blessing of contentment to myself. I have more than once endeavoured to keep a continual watch over myself, in order to

avoid my failings ; but then there was around me too much dissipation,—in which an effective vigilance cannot be preserved so easily as in the quietness of simple domestic life. I have more than once endeavoured to exercise myself in Christian virtue ; but then were the duties of it so incalculably numerous, that I despaired of being equally capable of all. Perhaps I thought to strengthen myself in good, by diligent prayer : yet with the devotion, the pious resolve almost universally disappeared in the crowd of passing events. Sometimes I sought, through the hearing of edifying sermons, or through the reading of pious writings, to excite in myself the virtues of a true Christian ; I felt the most lively emotions ;—my whole mind was stirred ;—the tears in my eyes attested how heartfelt was my desire for improvement. But then, when the flame of feeling was extinguished (and no mortal is by his nature capable of constantly upholding the same degree of sentiment), the first zeal was also chilled. I became again almost as I was before. Sometimes I sought to strengthen myself by impressing on my mind the most simple truths and principles of reason. For I hoped that I should be always mindful of them,—because firmly founded persuasions ought to be more lasting than bare emotions of the heart. But then in moments when I became unexpectedly the prey of a variety of

feelings, their violence withered all the fruits of previous reflection ; just as a drunkard forgets all the good principles, which, when sober, he had admired.

But if it be true, that one sin is the parent of others ; may not also one virtue be the parent of other virtues ? If it be true, (and how can I for a moment longer doubt it,) that in one virtue all virtues cohere, that no single one exists by itself ; should I not arrive at this conclusion, that through proper practice of one single virtue, I shall gradually attain to the possession of all others ? Then the multitude of different duties would not confuse me, because I should accomplish all in the perfect performance of one ; then would my virtue be less dependent upon transitory feelings, and my conviction be less quickly dimmed by any contending emotions of mind,—for I should always have only one and the same object before my eyes, in which conviction and feeling constantly unite. I would for this single, or parent virtue choose one, in the exercise of which, I am already by nature sensible of the most power and inclination. It is certainly the case, that the word of God agrees with these ideas ; it teaches, that in one virtue all others are contained ; that he who practises *perfectly* this one, at the same time performs the rest. Thus Jesus Christ commanded us to love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves. This is the

sum of all the Divine Commandments. Thus also did Peter, the disciple of Jesus, recommend Christian faith : “ *giving all diligence,*” said he, “ *add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (2 PET. i. 5—8.

But which now is that virtue, through the perfect practice of which I may be enabled to sanctify my whole heart? *Choose, as the parent of all your other virtues, that which is most easy to you.* But none will be more easy to you than that to which you are otherwise, through your station and disposition, most inclined :—because, as no fault is more difficult to overcome, than that which adheres to our disposition, so there is also no virtue more strong and immoveable, than that which, as it were, proceeds of itself from our whole nature and existence. It is true, the so-called virtues of the disposition have no great merit : they are not to be compared in intrinsic value, with those which can only be practised with severe self-denial. It is no great merit, when he who is already by nature gentle-minded, loves peace and forgives his ene-

mies ; it is no great merit, when a mother, who is already by nature devoted to her children, cares and labours for them. Yet, perhaps, what is wanting to the above virtues in higher value, they gain in estimation through their natural strength and durability. By this means, they are particularly qualified, as it were, to become both a sure foundation for the whole structure of virtue in our hearts, and to be the promoters of our spiritual sanctification. All others of the higher class of virtues must, indeed, produce the same effects ; but if their practice cost us much trouble,—if we run the hazard of often finding them unsettled ; then it is so much the more dangerous to make them the foundation-stone and point of support of our religious and moral perfection.

Search then, and prove yourself. Which of your good qualities is that, in which you feel yourself most strong and stedfast ? Is it Faith in Jesus,—is it love to God and man,—is it humility, or reverence for truth ?—whatever virtue it may be, you will find that from the most sublime, even the smallest will be developed, that from the smallest the highest also will at length bloom forth—if you only practise that one completely, at all times and in all circumstances. Yet, beware of making any virtue or good quality the tutelary spirit of your heart, if it only restrain you from bad

actions, without spurring you on to good ones. It must be no unfruitful, but an *active* virtue. An unfruitful virtue is *no* virtue ! It is no merit not to lie, not to steal, not to do injury, not to murder ; but it is a merit, it is praiseworthy, to bless those who curse us, to do good to them that hate us. Thus Jesus points out the *true virtue*, which is acceptable before God ! What then is that principle which in the most effectual manner excites and animates you to good, under the greatest variety of circumstances and at all times ?—This choose ! let this be your guide to perfection, to the imitation of Jesus, to the establishment of your durable peace of mind. It will appear, when you have proved yourself thoroughly, that something of this kind is existing in you. Entirely dead to good you cannot be. Do you feel a cordial, tender, thankful love towards your parents ? oh ! let this love be your guardian angel ; resign yourself entirely to this love ; do nothing without reference to those dear and honoured persons. Fancy them always present to your actions ; make them in idea the judges of your feelings ; imagine, even when they are absent, that they are present and the hearers of your words. If they be dead, let the recollection of them be just as solemn. And how know you that they are not the witnesses of your life ? Who knows the secrets of the world of spirits, and the

power of the glorified ? Let love and gratitude to these parents guide your steps, and if you truly love them, you will permit no unclean thought to abide within you, which you would be ashamed to speak before them ; you will neglect no noble deed by which you may do honour to their memory : so will no denial, no sacrifice, no self-control seem too hard for you, if it but make you worthy of them. Even to the most difficult things you will endeavour to attain, in the most determined manner, because thereby you express your love and thankfulness towards your parents, even without their seeing or hearing of it. This love will be your inward Sun, which shall warm and animate you to every thing that is praiseworthy ; from which all single virtues that you practise are only so many rays, enlightening and invigorating your soul. The more tender, true, and perfect your love, the more will it beam forth in all your thoughts, wishes, words, and deeds. Your virtues will unite you to Jesus—your faith in Jesus, to God. You behold in the Saviour of the world only your own glorious pattern, who loved *His* Father above all ;—who through love to God bore even the greatest sufferings with patience, overcame in the hour of temptation, willingly undertook every duty, even the most difficult—and submitted to the death upon the cross—for the salvation of mankind.

For ever and ever do I turn to Thee, O Jesus Christ, Thou great Instructor! In Thee alone I find united, whatever may serve me as a model in my path, as a light in my moral darkness: in Thy love and example alone do I find either courage or strength to strive to become a better man. Through Thee I find that virtue and sin cannot dwell together,—that I must not satisfy myself with merely useful actions,—that he is not Thy follower, who seeks not after true perfection and sanctity of heart. There is only one God—there is only one Virtue: he who practises one perfectly is secure of all.

This serious self-examination shall not be pursued by me in vain! I will exercise it continually, and fix in my mind the deep, firm foundation, upon which I may build my temple of Christian virtue. O Spirit of Holiness, Spirit of God, sanctify me by Thy Grace! Amen.

X.

LUKEWARMNESS.

REVELATION iii. 15.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or hot."

IT is one of those almost inexplicable contradictions which we observe in the nature of man, that he is frequently unwilling to divest himself of a quality which he most dislikes in others ; and that he has not the courage to follow in his own mode of thinking and acting, what he loves and admires in his fellow-creature.

Even in the play of children, we endeavour to find a determinate tendency of character. We take pleasure in predicting, from their first developments of mind, their future disposition—from their earliest favourite employments, their future calling. Children who show themselves destitute of mental vivacity—to whom every thing seems indifferent or alike—who manifest no peculiar pre-

dilection or distaste for any thing, excite but little interest.

Whatever a man may be, or however he may act, we cannot refrain from respecting him if he is, in his way, what he desires to be. Even the culprit, who evinces in his conduct a certain strength of mind, wins more on our sympathy, than he who has not courage enough to act uprightly, and yet is too cowardly to proceed in a wicked course. We pity the former, because he may have been led into evil by education or unfavourable circumstances. We are satisfied that he would have had vigour enough to become a valuable man ; but we doubly despise the cowardly sinner, who possesses as little capacity for good, as evil.

What is it that especially pleases us in the character of great and famous men ? It is the *unshifting firmness* with which they lay hold of every thing : it is the power and steadiness of their will, by which, even in adversity and danger, they attain their end. This their noble constancy—their wonderful perseverance through the vicissitudes of fortune—the fidelity with which they adhere to their glorious designs—inspire us with admiration, even to rapture. Their peculiarities, their little weaknesses, do not displease us, when they are in unison with their general character, with the rest of their modes of thinking. We love and admire such men

as these, because we know what they are, how they are, and for what they labour.

On the contrary, we have a natural aversion to every thing false, pusillanimous, or effeminate, in the character of a man—for with such an one we know not what we are about. We are disgusted with those who blow cold and hot with the same mouth—who never declare themselves—who hold nothing fast, and do not allow themselves to be held by any thing;—of whom one cannot say that they are either good or bad.

Who would enter into friendship and confidence with a man that will not make a return of open confidence and discriminating attachment? Who would give his heart to one that shows no cordiality? A lukewarm friend is no friend at all.

Thus it is in private and in public life. And even so it is in Christianity. A lukewarm Christian is no Christian. "*I know thy works,*" saith the Divine Word, "*that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*" But can we deny that when we look through the ranks of our friends and acquaintances, there are but few *zealous* Christians to be found? How few are there, who, with their *whole soul*, with *all their faculties*, are not only *worshippers*, but also *followers* of Jesus! How lukewarm are we in our faith—how lukewarm in our prayers—how lukewarm in the service

of God—how lukewarm in our good resolutions—how lukewarm in the performance of our duties, in the fulfilment of our moral and social obligations! “*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.*”

This spiritual lukewarmness—this fault which has now become so common—the fearful, perceptible preparative for the decline of true religion, is not merely *indifference* towards the Divine Word and the precepts of Jesus Christ.—No! there are numberless Christians who would not suffer the reproach of indifference in religious matters to rest upon them, who would think their feelings of honour and duty injured, if they were accounted indifferent to God and eternity; and who yet, if they look to their works, must confess that they are lukewarm, and in all good things neither cold nor hot.

Lukewarmness in religion is not always slackness in the observance of external public worship. Oh no! Look, when the church bells ring, in the town or village, how the Christian population rapidly assemble;—how they throng into the porch; with how much propriety they pray in the house of God: and yet, if you see these pious worshippers, these zealous supplicants for the mercy of God, in their own dwellings, in their families, in their business, in their enjoyments—how much lukewarm-

ness have they in conforming the course of their life to the will of Jesus ! How much is perceptible, that is unworthy of their high and sacred calling ! How entirely different is the man when at home, and amongst his equals, from him whom we saw praying in the church !

Neither is lukewarmness hypocrisy. For many men have an honest disposition, and are yet, as to Christianity, without warmth or zeal. They give alms liberally, and from true compassion ;—they serve their neighbour when he calls upon them for assistance ;—they regularly fulfil their duties ;—one can say nothing bad of them—but they are *not zealous* in the concerns of Christianity ; they are *not desirous* to improve their own hearts. They do good, but only when they are at leisure. The sacrifice of a particular pleasure or advantage were with them too much to be required as an act of Christian obligation. They do good, when by chance an occasion presents itself ; but to seek an occasion on which they might effect a work of love, of conciliation, or of public benefit—is a trouble for which they have no inclination.

What then is lukewarmness in Christianity ? It is a real indolence of the soul—a want of energy in declaring ourselves decidedly, in every thought and action, as the disciples of Jesus, as the imitators of Jesus—as Christians, the expectants of eter-

nity and spiritual perfection. Lukewarmness is a want of endeavour in the soul to become entirely what we would wish to be. The lukewarm man deems Christian virtue worthy of admiration ; but either does not take any pains to practise it with vigour, or sets it aside for another more convenient season. He edifies himself with the precepts of the Divine Word, but cannot inwardly apprehend and practise them. He reverences Jesus as the Redeemer, the source of everlasting happiness ;—he calls the most High, Father : but loves not God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with self-denying fervour. He has more fear of the derision and contempt of ignorant, thoughtless men, than of the all-seeing eye of God—than of the warning words of the Saviour : “ *Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.*”

This is lukewarmness in Christianity. Hence so many who are baptized unto Christ—and so few true Christians : hence so many called, and so few chosen. Hence the hands so ready to fold themselves in prayer, yet so indolent in works of mercy : hence so much reverence and decorum in the Church, and at home so little modesty, so little kindness and forbearance : hence so many pious words and fine speeches, so few pious acts and fine sentiments.

And whence arises this lukewarmness in Christ-

ianity ? For it is of importance to know the fountains of this evil, in order to avoid them. But who can tell them all ? From a thousand hidden sources evil streams into the world :—good flows only from a single spring—from an upright Christian heart !

The lukewarmness, however, of many Christians, arises from *the mode of their early education*. It is this, especially, which gives the unalterable direction to the whole course of our life. How then can thorns bear the noble produce of the vine ? How can pious children be modelled under the guidance of degenerate parents, and become zealous sons and daughters of the Christian Church, if their parents propose to them, instead of the religion of the heart, only an outward form of serving God, instead of love, forbearance, honesty, and goodness towards one another, only censoriousness, hatred, petty revenge—at most, prudence, courteousness, and propriety ?

Our sons and daughters may know the will of God, and the precepts of Jesus Christ ; but they will not show more obedience to them than their parents show. Example encourages them to frivolity and lukewarmness in religion ; and no wonder then if they become even worse Christians than their parents.

Another source of lukewarmness in Christianity is *a certain timidity, a false shame, to appear in*

religious affairs, or to seem religious. Where we ought to acquire honour by our creed, we dread to meet with derision ; where by a sense of holiness we might secure respect, we tremble for fear of being misinterpreted. We are unwilling to be more particular than the great crowd around us, and we become as unjust to ourselves, as infirm of purpose, and as lukewarm as the multitude. Thus, at last, a man accustoms himself to love prudence better than virtue ; he values the refinements of life more than Christian-like purity of heart. He cares more for his body than his mind. Why should not wisdom be consistent with unsullied virtue—why should not a liberal style of life agree with a pious disposition towards God ? To be a zealous imitator of Jesus, holy names and words are not at all times necessary—but holy deeds. The world is not yet so sunk into the abyss of evil, that noble acts are become a shame ; philanthropy, a curse ; mercy, an object of derision. Whence, therefore, is that false shame in the concerns of religion ? Why should a man be shy of confessing : ‘ I do this thing, because it is my duty ; because it is imposed by God upon me ; because otherwise I should not be worthy to participate in the hopes of eternity. I pray, because an intercourse with the Most High ennobles me. I frequent the public service of Christians, because my heart has constant need of being

refreshed and strengthened by the Divine Word. I live as a Christian, as a child of God ; and so will I live, because I shall die—because I shall die, in order that I may live for ever.’

Lukewarmness in religion originates very frequently in *a relaxation of the powers of the soul, by the habits and cares of daily life*. For the man who is surrounded from morning to night with the objects of his official or domestic occupations ; or is engaged with the thoughts of his earnings or anticipated pleasures ; or is absorbed by dissatisfaction on account of some injury sustained—or by other trifling temporary objects—very easily forgets himself and his higher nature and destiny, in the multitude of his pursuits and cares. He too readily makes the providing for a livelihood, or worldly joys and sorrows, the chief business of his days ; and *religion, the very life, the vital breath of the soul, becomes a secondary object*. He practises it only in leisure hours : he loves it not—he lives not in it. He becomes imperceptibly lukewarm and neglectful—instead of virtuous, only circumspect—instead of pious, only decent and well-seeming. He considers himself a Christian, without doing any one really Christian work.

I said, “Religion is the life, the health of the soul.” Yes—it is so. A soul without a sense of holiness, without a pious love of Christ, without

religious endeavour after its own perfecting, every where and at all times, even in public life ;—a soul without a constant thirst, as it were, after its own glorification, lies, as the Scripture saith, in the “chains of darkness,” and in “the shadow of death.” It lives not : only its body lives—only its animal spirit lives. It cares for the body alone—it is anxious only for its temporal state ;—but it is not holy ; it is not Christian ; it is not heavenly.

If we are to consider no more than that which we should do and be on earth—truly this life were not worth the living. Is it by this lukewarmness that we are to return the love of Christ, who, pure, great, and holy, offered himself for the salvation of mankind ? Is it with this lukewarmness that we are to acknowledge the unspeakable love of God, the Father of all, who hath pleasure in the work of his own hands ? Does God permit his love to be returned, his happiness to be attained, by such a want of feeling ;—a love, a happiness, without which the whole universe would have been one vast grave ?

If there be a God in Heaven ;—if there be a judge of the human heart above the clouds ;—if an eternity remain beyond the moment of death—how can the heart of man grow cold in love to the Creator ? How can it become indifferent and lukewarm in those divine duties, into the performance of which our Judge will one day inquire ? How can it look

upon eternity as a mere dream, and on the transient dream of life below as a boundless eternity ?

Arise, my soul, glow thou with sublime and holy thoughts of thy God and of thy calling. Quicken thy zeal and activity, and cease to degrade that which is most holy by lukewarmness. To thee also apply the words : “ *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.* ”

This unnatural situation of the soul—this wavering between indifference and love, between life and death, is fatal to thee,—is fatal to thousands of others. Therefore adds the Divine Word, “ *I would that thou wert cold or hot.* ”

For if you, who are now lukewarm, were cold in religion, you would be, perhaps, an open reviler of it : we should know you ; we should be able to avoid you ; we should warn our sons and daughters against your company ; every upright man would pity you in his heart, as a senseless maniac. You would not injure any one else by your example, but would confine your mischief, though it be the greatest possible mischief, to yourself.

But the lukewarm Christian is often, by his example, more dangerous than the scoffer. His behaviour is not offensive : we approach him, therefore, without suspicion. He merits respect, perhaps, in public ; no one fears to imitate him ; and being active in business—but neither cold nor hot in

Christian practice, which he only observes for the sake of appearance—he finds many followers.

He understands, perhaps, the art of amassing riches, for which the common herd of men pay him the utmost deference ; but he has no pleasure in any higher good. He has, perhaps, obtained great offices in public life, but he wants the magnanimity which religion teaches. He has, perhaps, a reputation for knowledge, and learning, and rare gifts ; but the knowledge of the Most High, and that vivifying wisdom—an insight into the value and object of his existence—are little regarded by him. Thus does he possess every thing that is calculated to glitter before the world ; but before God all is dark. The multitude, alas ! too easily misled, look upon him as a model of perfection ; become dazzled by his appearance ; and, as lukewarm in religion as himself, strive zealously for that alone which may conduce to their worldly interests.

Thus we involuntarily corrupt the hearts of hundreds of others by the example of our lukewarmness ! we are guilty of their sins. We confirm the ignorant, credulous, and fickle crowd in the opinion, that religion is only a secondary matter ; that with outward customs, with simple alms, with only the form of daily prayer, with the observance of Church solemnities, it is quite possible to fulfil all their duties towards God ; and that it is enough only to

injure no one openly, and to give obedience to the constituted authorities and the law of the land, in order to perform their duty towards men. Ah! let us not deceive ourselves; God is not mocked! Let us not deceive ourselves—the salvation of our soul is not to be trifled with! The lukewarm Christian is not a true Christian. He neglects himself—he neglects that which is eternal, which dwells within him. He is zealously careful for the splendid decking of his corpse, which will come speedily to corruption; and he forgets the importance of that heavenly exhortation, “*Seek first the kingdom of God.*” And the kingdom of God is the empire of the spirits of just men made perfect—of exalted souls:—it is the dominion of higher powers; it is that seat of superior intelligences, to which our spirits should aspire.

Thou also, my soul, art called to this eternal kingdom; wherefore wilt thou so often sink into that indolence and inactivity which fetter thee in thy course to perfection? Why lettest thou thy courage so often fail; thy zeal so often slacken—thy zeal to become a more worthy child of God, a more virtuous and holy being, more like God?

Glow then again, my heart, with that love to thyself—to thy vocation—to thy Father in Heaven which thou once didst feel! Glow again with that love which animated thee, in auspicious hours, to

act well and nobly,—as Jesus, as each of His disciples in thy place would have acted. Glow again with that love towards all mankind with which Christ was filled, and in the ardour of which He offered all, lost all, bore all, to diffuse happiness over the human race.

O God ! O Thou all-animating, all-blessing—vast Spirit of the universe ! O Thou Most High, Unknown, Invisible ! Thou Almighty Lord of worlds and Creator of the humblest worm ! O Thou, who art also my Creator, my Father, who dost regard my soul with eternal love—I had also days in which my thoughts were lukewarm towards Thee. O Thou Omniscient, Thou knewest my works, that I was neither cold nor hot ? And yet, Thou, O God, who art alone perfect, alone good—yet hast Thou continued to support me. And if I forgot Thee,—forgot Thee, for the sake of man—heaven, for the world—the immortal soul, for the dust—yet hast Thou loved me more and more,—Thou hast not forgotten me !

No ; my Saviour, I again belong to Thee ! my love, my gratitude shall not again grow cold. Thou didst once die for me—why should I not live entirely to *Thee* and to *Thy will* ? Thou wilt confess me before God—why should I deny Thee before men ?

Away then with false shame—miserable foolish prejudices. Let your greatest pride be such mag-

nanimity as Jesus showed. This alone is permanent, and at the hour of death rises above the transitory world. Let your highest glory be the glory of being a Christian. Let the weak world laugh—I will be still a Christian. Let it call me a hypocrite, a fanatic, or a fool; I will openly venerate the Divine Teacher and Saviour of mankind. Let the world call me imprudent, yet will I endeavour to act honourably, truly, uprightly, placably, and faithfully, even should it conduce to my loss or danger. *I will*—and the will alone belongs to man—the success of my actions depends on God—*I will*; and let my will be pure, be holy, be the witness of my unextinguishable love to Thee, O God,—Thou source of my life, and of my everlasting happiness.

XI.
THE DIVINE NAME.

Exodus xx. 7.

*"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ;
for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name
in vain."*

*"O COME, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel
before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God."*
(Ps. xcv. 6, 7.)


Who is greater, more glorious, wonderful, and gracious, than the ETERNAL—before whom the mighty of the Earth vanish away—as nothing ; and the pomp of mortals is as dust ? Can the most powerful here below construct a blade of grass, or draw down a drop of water from the clouds of Heaven ? Can the most formidable man prolong his life for a single moment, when the measure of his hours is full ?

Wherefore do the foolish boast of their greatness—those of whom after a few years nothing more is heard ? Why do they imagine themselves all-powerful, because they are able to oppress a feeble

fellow-creature? Fall not the strongest under the strokes of their enemies, or into a similar grave with the poorest inhabitant of the earth? Only ONE is really great and all-powerful and eternal; and HIS NAME IS GOD.

Why are you astonished at the ingenuity of the human mind; what are its works—even the most precious? Man puts together dust with dust, in order to build himself a dwelling—to weave garments,—or to form resemblances of the works of nature, after their outward appearance. Does not animal instinct also teach the brute to frame its dwelling as ingeniously as man; and often more cleverly than he? We must admire the foresight of Bees and Ants, and observe how the birds of Heaven choose and build their nests, or take their passage from one region to another. ONE only is infinitely wise, incomprehensibly wonderful in His works—He joins not dust to dust like the wild beast or artful man; but He endues the dust with secret powers, and a living soul. And this wondrous Being is GOD HIMSELF.

What can you praise, that is not His work? What can you love, that He has not formed? What can delight you here below, that is not the gift of His Grace and Bounty? What can you fear, that is not subject to His sceptre? For what can you hope, that He is not capable of bestowing?



The longer we consider God in His immeasurable creation, or in the vicissitudes of fate which He ordains and regulates—the deeper veneration will our spirit feel for the great, ineffably exalted, HOLY ONE. Trembling, and magnifying His sacred name, we shall exclaim with Paul: “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and to Him, and through Him are all things; to whom be Glory for ever. Amen.*” (Rom. xi. 33—36.)

To the truly enlightened and wise man,—that is, to the Christian deeply impressed with the Greatness of God—there is nothing so sacred as the Name of God. And when his heart echoes the sententious, sublime prayer of Jesus, he repeats no passage with greater reverence, than the words: “*Hallowed be Thy name.*” Thoughts of the Most High, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, fill him with awe.

All people, however various their religious schemes may be, feel this reverence for the Supreme Being. Many scarcely venture to utter His holy Name. Others do not pronounce it without bowing the

head, or bending the knee; or without outwardly signifying by a look which is directed humbly to the Earth, or devoutly raised to Heaven, as to the Throne of the Ruler of the Universe, what they feel inwardly in their hearts respecting the Majesty of God.

But how is it in the community of Christians, who are enlightened by the revelation of Jesus Christ? Are not Christians influenced by a still higher reverence for God? Are they not an example to all people of adoring veneration, when they call their Maker to remembrance? Is not their whole demeanour full of seriousness, dignity, and love, when they mention **THE HOLY NAME**?

Ah, no! They name Him without thinking of Him, and speak of Him as they would of the most worthless thing. Children cry out on Him in the streets, as if in sport; and adults swear and curse by Him,—as if He would be an abettor of their wantonness. Nay—the same men who would tremble at the name of a comparatively powerless being, an earthly Prince, make a jest of the Lord of Hosts! The same men who humbly cringe before the civil magistrate, when they have occasion to address him, will gabble their prayers to God with a vacant laugh—with utter distraction of thought—without a sign of respect—as if there were no God above, and prayer to Him were only a senseless farce.

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Whence arise this contempt and disregard of the Almighty Ruler of the World ? Whence this profanation and blasphemy of the Great Name before which all people tremble ?—Whence is this most deplorable practice, especially, amongst those who call themselves the followers, the disciples, the servants, the consecrated people of the Divine Son, the revealer of Heaven, the Saviour of all men—even JESUS CHRIST ?

Gross must be the ignorance of the man who so entirely forgets himself, as that among all objects and names, that of God is the most indifferent to him. How much must it distress the true philanthropist, when he finds those amongst Christians who in their veneration for the greatness and majesty of God are yet far behind the blindest Pagan !

There are many Christians, who, notwithstanding their name, their baptism, their communion, are more rude and ignorant than the Heathen, and no better in any respect than they. They have a Religion, but no religiousness—they have a God, but no awe of Him.

This is a consequence of the wild state of mind in which a nation is sometimes left, whilst sums upon sums are spent in martial splendour, in spectacles, feasts, and glittering follies, rather than on

the schools of the common people in the towns and villages. This is sometimes a consequence of the carelessness with which the Christian minister at the altar performs the duties of his important office ; of his thinking it sufficient if the public shew respect to his person—if the laity fulfil the services prescribed by the Church—attend the house of God—repeat the common prayers without reflecting on the meaning—and receive the sacrament at stated times. It is sometimes the consequence of the unjustifiable negligence of those who have the care of souls, in entering the pulpit unprepared in heart or spiritual attainments for their important functions. They again and again exhort to the praise of God without being able to awaken any worthy ideas of the Divine Majesty—they continually remind their hearers of the merits of Jesus, or the intercession of the Holy One, without clearly explaining the duties of a Christian, and how a man ought to render himself a less unworthy object of eternal mercy by a godly course of life in spirit and in deed.

This ignorance of the people on religious matters and duties, produces the shameful barbarism of which we may be witnesses almost daily—that base spirit which trembles before the rod that is seen, but despises the unseen ; which rather looks to the moment that now is, than thinks of the Eternity

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which is yet to come ; which abstains from transgression more through fear of Hell, than from love for Heaven.

Resembling this rude state, which arises out of ignorance, is that want of spiritual cultivation in men of higher rank, who have received full instruction in the arts and sciences of life, but not in this saving knowledge, which respects their piety and the preparation of their soul for an eternal state. They fancy themselves, infatuated as they are, wiser and greater than other men, when they deride their Faith ;—they avoid wickedness only through fear of ignominy ;—they do good only for profit's sake ;—they hold religion to be only a superstitious fiction to frighten the vulgar with ;—they consider virtue only as something decent, which must be observed before the eyes of the world, but can be laid aside in private without prejudice. They are refined, artificially educated—and yet half-beasts, which see only the earth beneath them, and no heaven above.

Nor is it always rudeness, ignorance, and foolish superstition, which lead to the profanation of the Divine Name. Still more frequently is it merely a blamable *levity*, which deprives God of his due respect ;—a *fondness for imitation*, which imagines that there is something great in swearing and cursing and taking God's Holy Name in vain ;—*self-*

conceit, which thinks to distinguish itself by making a display of extraordinary inattention at Church or in family prayer ;—or *habitual distraction of mind*, which, in whatever is done daily, allows only the lips to act ; and the thoughts in the mean while to flutter after other objects.

All this operates to diminish reverence for the Deity—reverence for Jesus Christ ; and tends to the improper use of those sacred Names which never should be spoken without a holy feeling of thankfulness and devotion.

Often is the frequent utterance of the sacred Name of God, or that of Jesus, on unimportant occasions, merely a proof of extreme poverty of thought,—where something is to be spoken, and we know not what is the most appropriate theme. This becomes with many men so much a custom, without their intending to do any thing wicked, without their thinking that they are guilty of any actual sin, that they cannot break themselves of the scandalous and irreligious habit without the strictest attention to their words.

Even so is the misuse of God's Name by cursing and swearing often more a thoughtless custom, the consequence of a bad education, than the sign of a radically corrupted heart. Cursing and swearing, are, certainly, at all times, an infallible proof of the want of a proper sense of what is really be-

coming, honourable and right—it is, moreover, a proof that the man who enforces his conversation with such excessive—such impious—asseverations, must previously have spoken much untruth, and deserves no credit. For we believe him, from whom we are accustomed to hear the truth, even when he does not confirm his statements with curses and oaths. But whoever has entitled himself to the character of a liar, who does not always speak truly, to him we give no credence ; and when he fluently utters his horrible curses, or calls the Deity to witness—then his thoughtless precipitation is made still more evident.

The words of the Christian, the asseverations with which he affirms or denies any thing, should be like the words of a man of veracity who is convinced of the rectitude of his own statement—a simple yes or no ! All that is more than this, every addition of cursing and swearing renders his word questionable, and as Jesus hath already said ; “ *cometh of evil.*” (MATT. v. 37.) “ *I say unto you,*” said Christ, “ *swear not at all ; neither by heaven ; for it is God’s throne : nor by the earth ; for it is His footstool : neither by Jerusalem ; for it is the City of the great King.*” (MATT. v. 34, 35.)

The misuse of God’s Name in common life is always blamable and deserving of punishment ; even when there is not connected with it any bad inten-

tion or mischievous design. For, if any one know that what he does is unworthy of himself and of God ; that it is dishonourable to him ; that it is injurious to his mind ; that it will be, as a bad example, prejudicial to others : whoever knows this and nevertheless proceeds, with a licentious tongue, to blaspheme or to call on the Most High without devotion—is he not a sinner ? Can he justify his levity because it is levity ? This would be to excuse a sin because it is a sin.

The irreverent use of the Divine Name shews a blamable *want of love towards the Most Holy Being*. Who can endure that the name of him whom he loves should be dishonoured ? Where is there a good child who would remain unconcerned when the name of his parents is reviled ? And shall we permit THE DIVINE NAME to be profaned by unworthy application ?

If any one should address you, but at the same time turn his back, and scarcely noticing your presence, occupy himself with any trifling objects, rather than with you, with whom he is conversing—would you not necessarily be convinced, that this man despised you ; that he preferred the meanest things ; and never had entertained any spark of love or esteem for you in his heart ? How then ! when you utter the name of the Most High God, without even desiring to think of Him ;

when you pray without noticing Him; when you thank Him with the mouth without feeling any gratitude in your heart—are not these sufficient demonstrations of the greatest want of piety towards your Creator, your unceasing Benefactor ?

The irreverent use of the Holy Name degrades *the heart and understanding of mankind*—not God! You, blasphemer! do not injure God, though with senseless curses, oaths, and exclamations, you confound the vilest things with the most holy—but yourself. You exhibit to the world, with a shameless tongue, the pitiable irregularity of your mind, the viciousness of your taste—when you trample on things the most worthy of honour with impudent deliberation ;—you admit that your simple word is not to be relied on, when at every moment you challenge all that is great and holy in the universe, to give witness and warrant to your assertions ;—you shew the narrowness of your understanding, which comprehends not Truth ; and entertains the most miserable conceptions of the greatness and majesty of the Godhead ! You dishonour yourself—not God.—You violate your own dignity—not that of God. Dust, produced from dust ; how can your folly, extreme as it is, affect the eternal and all-glorious Deity ? How can an atom eclipse the star of day—that sun which throws

forth his dazzling rays through the immeasurable expanse of heaven, to warm and enlighten extensive worlds!

The irreverent use of the Holy Name does injury to *our sense of virtue, and religious feelings*. Who takes delight in such innate or acquired, real or artificial coarseness of manners,—how can he properly regard the more delicate cultivation of mind in all that is noble, great, and good? How can he have a mind susceptible of religious impressions? How can he one hour pray with fervor to his Father in Heaven, whom, an hour before without any feeling, he named in the most improper manner? The Christian who is in earnest to advance his spiritual growth, and to appear acceptable in the eyes of God, must begin by putting away everything that is offensive, and by manifesting his feelings for virtue, and his cordial love of godliness in all actions. But that rude state of mind, which covers itself in impudence of speech, renders difficult the purification of the heart, and the enlightenment of the spirit. Moreover, by such disorderly practices, the good man is intimidated and repulsed—the libertine and bad companion are allured. Thence result mutual incitements to evil, to impurity of conduct, and to low passions, which destroy the health of the body, and the peace of the soul.

The irreverent use of God's Holy Name *corru*

both the heart and manners of innocent youth. In them, that which was only foolishness or idle habit, becomes a crime through the force of example. Ye who profane the name of your God—how do you hope that your children will feel any reverence for the Most Holy? You parents, who allow yourselves to pray thoughtlessly, whether in the morning or evening, or at the table which the bounty of the Giver of all good things provided; how can you hope that your children will learn to hold communion with their Eternal Father with an inward and happy confidence that He will hear them? Parents! it is you who through your bad example exclude the love of God and godliness from the hearts of your children. It is you who make their religion to consist only in an effort of the memory, or in old established customs—which is to destroy the vital spirit of religion. You, who are a scandal to the innocent, are they of whom Jesus saith, “*Woe to him by whom the offence cometh.*”

Many an one has, perhaps, never seriously considered the sad consequences of the levity with which he too often profanes the name of his God: many an one has, perhaps, never rightly understood the disgracefulness and the penalty of this abuse. May he duly reflect on his own conduct, and on the evil which he unknowingly commits: and if his heart be not altogether alienated from the good way, he will tremble and repent of his sins.

There are but two efficacious methods of repressing this vice when it has become habitual. The first is, a persevering, resolute attention to all our words,—so that we do not permit ourselves the slightest expression which offends against the respect we owe to the Creator of our days, and the Redeemer of our souls. The second is, a steadfast endeavour to perceive and know more clearly the greatness, might, and mercy of the Lord.

For—Heavenly Father, Thou who art full of love and compassion—how can he who hath once rightly known Thee, regard Thee with indifference, or pray to Thee with inattention? He who observes Thy greatness and wondrous power in the works of nature, or has perceived Thee in the events of his own life; how can he profane Thy Holy Name, and treat it like any worthless thing?

O Thou Supreme, at whose glorious Name all knees shall bow,—before whom all angels bend in prayer, all worlds are struck with awe—never will I disgrace myself by a want of that reverence which my poor soul owes to Thee for all the benefits Thou hast conferred upon it. Even in the outward signs of reverence will I be extremely strict—for they proclaim my inward feelings to other men, may become an example to others, and will assist my own devotion.

Father in Heaven—HALLOWED BE THY NAME!

XII.

THE OMISSION OF GOOD.

JAMES iv. 17.

*"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him
it is sin."*

WHEN we speak of the worth of men—of the goodness of heart of our intimate or our distant acquaintances, how indefinite is the standard we adopt. Yes—even of our own worth we have only too often the most erroneous apprehensions. We compare ourselves with others who have been guilty of this or that imprudence ; and although there may not be in our general character, the pharisaic pride so justly blamed by Jesus Christ, yet the feeling arises in our bosom which tempts us to say : *"I thank God that I am not as other men are."*

We commonly consider ourselves as quite entitled to account every one worse than ourselves, who may have committed a deed which we have not yet committed ; which, according to our present disposition and circumstances, we would not, or in our actual situation, could not commit. Are we, therefore, better than the acknowledged delinquent ?

There may, in fact, be many men who have naturally a more virtuous mind than we, and yet, through bad conduct, may bring upon themselves the contempt of their fellow-citizens, and may even deserve to be punished by the civil magistrate. Sometimes through education, sometimes through temperament, sometimes through other co-operating accidents, they are led against their will, into crimes from which our education or our fortune has kept us entirely free. Are we, therefore, better than they ? Have we already experienced the most dangerous hours of trial, and happily maintained, at such times, our principles and steadfastness against the pressure of circumstances, and stormy passions ?

With how hard-hearted and uncharitable a feeling have we often judged of the unfortunate precipitation of a man, who, being overtaken by anger, perhaps in a terrific moment became a murderer—was with the greatest justice apprehended by the magistrate—and suffered punishment according to the law. He became a murderer ; and yet he might have been, but for the neglect of his impetuous mind, one of the best, the most charitable, the most affectionate of men, and the most intent on good. He is now certainly deserving of punishment : nothing can make amends for his disgraceful conduct. His heartfelt repentance cannot recall the past. But am I therefore, a better man than he, because I

have no manslaughter on my conscience ? Dare I make a boast of my meekness and forbearance, when perhaps I have to thank only my personal timidity, my natural shyness and indolence, for these supposed virtues ?

How often is the false step of a degraded girl judged with malicious exultation, or spoken of with proud contemptuous pity ; and how many of her rigorous judges say to themselves with flattering egotism : “ *I thank God that I am not as she is !* ” But know, you who so judge, that the unfortunate being whom you despise, was, perhaps, more holy and chaste at heart than you. She, perhaps, loved virtue more earnestly, more cordially than you : but she might have to stand a stronger contest with her passions than you—a contest which only the Omniscient knew—till deceived and seduced, in an unhappy moment she forgot herself as well as her religious principles—and sunk into infamy. You, indeed, a rigorous judge of your pitiable sister, dare to boast that you are not guilty of so great a sin : but is this actually your own merit ? Did your circumstances bring you into so dangerous a disposition as that in which she was placed ? Was it always your love for virtue which saved you ; or rather was it the fear of shame, or even the want of opportunity ? Has your heart, has your imagination, always remained unpolluted ?

As Jesus Christ, when a sinner was brought to

him that he might condemn her, replied : “ *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her ;*” in like manner, we in the present day should always judge of persons whose secret failings come to light, while the consequences of our own are veiled, or remain confined to our own memory. We are not to consider ourselves as perfect, because we have not hitherto attracted the attention of mankind, through any gross misde-meanour, rendered notorious by its effects.

In common life, indeed, we usually call him a good man, a person of irreproachable character, to whom, justly speaking, we cannot impute any thing disgraceful or unbecoming :—and many imagine that they have great merit on this account, and a claim on the respect of their fellow-citizens, because none have cause to complain of them. But is it a merit not to be a transgressor ? Should we love the rich man merely because he is not a thief or robber ?—the weakly and aged, because he is not a seducer of the innocent ?—the timid, because he is not a murderer or a quarreller ? Who shall go before God with a heart at ease, and rejoice in His approbation, that can only say : “ I have not deceived or betrayed ; I am no drunkard or slanderer ?” Are then the acts which we have not committed, acts at all ? And can we expect a harvest from seed which we have not sowed ?

“ *Be not deceived ; God is not mocked.*” We

have been called upon—not merely to do the least possible evil, but to do the greatest possible good. The servant who knows his lord's will and does it not, “*shall be beaten with many stripes.*” (LUKE xii. 47.) Surely it is a crime to have omitted a virtue which we had an opportunity of practising. For “*to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*” (JAMES iv. 17.)

The greater part of mankind, bent only on such earthly matters as respect their temporal advantage, their convenience, or their pleasures, live on in a vulgar mediocrity of thinking and acting. Nobody can censure them—but then, in our conscience, we cannot approve of them. They are much too indolent and shy to do mischief; but they are likewise too indolent and shy to do good. They imagine that they have fulfilled every thing that is incumbent on them, when perhaps they have done no more than assist in accomplishing a work of charity in which they have engaged either through temperament, or by way of pastime, or in the desire of obtaining popularity. This is no virtue. They are in fact sinful and contemptible beings, if they avoided exertion when it was demanded of them, and only attempted that which, for various reasons, they could not leave undone. “*To him*

that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin," saith the word of God.

As soon as a man has passed the years of infancy, he knows the sphere of his obligations. And had no father, no master, taught him his duty to God and man, an inward voice would awake in his bosom, and tell him what was right and wrong. Go into the most distant regions inhabited by men; with all their barbarism, you will still find in them a sense of good and evil. For the Deity reveals Himself in such a measure to the understanding and hearts of mortals, that no one has any excuse for violating the laws of nature.

Least of all has the Christian an excuse. What may as yet only hover indistinctly before the eyes of the barbarian in his heathen state—that has Jesus presented to our view in brilliant light. We know His words, in which He declares to us the holy Will of our Creator—we are made acquainted with His life—a life of innocence, righteousness, and love—and with His self-sacrifice for the salvation of mankind: it is a bright mirror in which we are bound to look. How then can we excuse our neglect, if we do not as much good on earth as our opportunities will allow?

Moreover, no one can justly complain that opportunities to be useful and serviceable to his

fellow-creatures by beneficent acts, are ever wanting to him. For numerous occasions present themselves every day, had we only the mind—the proper will—to embrace them.

It is true, we may not be able to execute all the good we would willingly perform. But let us take care not to seek too eagerly for that which lies beyond our reach ; and in consequence neglect the lesser good which is at hand, and within our power. Yet this is a common fault with men, that they look far beyond the limits of their own business, and complain that they are not in a situation to accomplish this or that benevolent undertaking ; or that they are not in the place of this or that person, —fancying that they should have been much more useful and active than he. Look to your own relative duties : they are sufficiently extensive to constitute a wide scene for your piety and virtue. Do not say : ‘ Had I as much fortune as such an individual, I would certainly make better use of it.’ Wherefore then do you not make the best use of your smaller fortune ? Is it so inconsiderable, that a great deal cannot be spared from it without injury to yourself or your family ? Why do you not, then, set apart for the consolation of the suffering, at least a small portion, instead of spending it on the increasing of your conveniences, on the multiplying of your pleasures, on the gratifying of your

appetite with food of a choicer quality ? And are you so indigent, that at length you cannot spare the most trifling matter more ? Do you not possess the gift of speech ? Have you not some more wealthy acquaintances to whom you can speak in behalf of a necessitous family ? It is always much easier to speak a word for another, than for yourself.

Say not : ‘ Had I the authority of a powerful prince, I would give to the world the peace of which it has been long deprived, and restore prosperity, love, and concord to my people.’ Why do you not then perform the praiseworthy work amongst your own connexions ? Why do you not make peace with your own enemies ? Why then do you refuse so proudly to offer the hand of reconciliation to him who has insulted you ? Why do you not avoid all temptations to mockery of the defects of others, and all exasperation of their feelings ? Why are you weak enough, when you hear evil spoken of your neighbours, to be silent ;—why when a disagreement exists between your acquaintances, instead of accommodating the misunderstanding, do you unconcernedly permit it to continue ;—instead of making those who are provoked agree to a mutual concession and forgiveness, why do you rather harden them by assenting to their uncharitable judgment of each other, or increase their enmity by tale-bearing ?

Say not : ‘ Had I this or that calling ; were I invested with this or that office—how active, how unwearied, how useful would I be : but in my own occupation I am paralyzed, and do not the thousandth part of the things for which I feel the best capacity.’ Why are you not then, with all your good ability, the most eminent of your fellows in your more contracted sphere of action ? Why do you not prove that you would be worthy of a higher one, by perfectly fulfilling all the obligations of your present station ?

He who knows not how to improve a single talent, how shall he be set over great possessions ? Are you, in your own business and occupation, the most skilful of your line ? if so, how easy would it be for you to extend your useful activity far beyond it.

Observe—this is an omission of good which you know how, and have power to fulfil. This is your sin !

There is no man who may not find, every day, at least one opportunity of doing good : even the most needy beggar in the street is not without some such opportunities. Still, in order to perceive them when they do occur, we must be *willing* to observe them. The most common deficiency is in the inclination. This is the omission of good. Accuse not Providence for not having placed you in circum-

stances in which you can make your virtues manifest—accuse rather your own sloth, which hinders you from opening your eyes to see what lies around you. No opportunity for good is wanting to you, but the first principles of good—namely, *unfeigned charity, and a desire to be of service*. Whoever possesses these—he knows how to shew some kindness towards every one with whom he comes in contact; and to be useful to many, whether present or absent. He knows how to spare some of his savings to help others, or to assist in works of public benefit: he has ready at hand, if not always money, yet here a good word—there an appropriate counsel—or a theme of consolation.

Ask yourself only, after the completion of a day's work, in the stillness of the evening: 'Have I done all the good I might have done? Have I advantageously improved every occasion on which I could exercise my virtue?' And if your memory recall no instance of this—then ask yourself again the single question: 'And what good should I have done, if I had wished to be an example of benevolence and active charity?' Your conscience will, on reflection, answer you and say: 'That which thou hast not done!' '*Whosoever knows to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*'

The guilt of the omission of good actions becomes so much the greater before God, our Omni-

scient Judge, and at the bar of our own consciences, in proportion as it is easier for us to perform them. But innumerable things are not done, which it would have been easy for us to accomplish—for not only has every mortal a sufficient knowledge of what is right, but every one has various and plain opportunities of acting according to his knowledge—one for the exercise of this, and another of that virtue.

To him who is tender and feeling by nature, it could cost little to practise the duty of compassion towards the unfortunate, in word and deed. Why then, does he not foster the godly impulse of his heart? Why does he put a force upon himself, and not allow the voice of nature to be heard? Alas! he is sometimes deterred from a work of mercy by vanity, or the fear of what people will say;—sometimes he is prevented by a propensity to indolence from going into the dwellings of the unfortunate, of whose miseries he has casually heard, or from informing himself more particularly of their circumstances and of the best method of relieving them;—sometimes he is turned aside by an unpardonable levity; sometimes by a love of shew, for which many expenses are to be incurred. To him, who is naturally of a bold and determined character, it costs little to succour the oppressed. And why does he, who is by nature an enemy to

injustice, stifle this noble feeling ? It is selfishness which forces him against his better inclination to remain dumb. There are other considerations towards persons to whom he wishes to recommend himself, which make him allow the wrong to pass for right.

Whoever possesses authority or influence over the minds and actions of his fellow-citizens—to him it is an easy matter to take the lead in numberless good things, or to promote what may be difficult to others, even with the utmost exertion of their power. It is enough for him only to give a bare approval, a single encouraging word, in order to have an useful measure adopted. Wherefore does he not speak the word ? Ah ! because the thing is, as to its object, very indifferent to him,—and it would likewise give him trouble to think about it—or because his love of convenience excuses itself by the counter question : ‘ Why should I mix myself with any thing which does not immediately concern me ? ’—or because the subject involves matters which only regard a strange person, a strange town, or a strange village, and their benefit—not his own.

A double responsibility attaches to that man who omits the good, where not only opportunity for doing it is offered him, but even his natural inclination leads him to it, and the means, which

render it easy, are at his disposal. Here, evidently, the culpable omission of duty arises from the effect of the previous existence of some powerful and opposite vice, that is, either egotism, envy, pride, indolence, levity, or carelessness.

You love those who love you and flatter you—you do good to those from whom you may expect a return of favours. What is this more than selfishness? Do not the Heathen so? Nay, do not the beasts of the earth the same? Jesus Christ enumerates the sublimer duties of His Religion:—if you avoid them, then do not suppose that there is any sound principle in your heart. You commit no crime—you do not deceive, slander, overreach, or persecute your neighbour—but what have you done more? Of all this the inanimate stone, which you tread under your feet, is equally capable.

How destitute, then, must you appear, if your immortal soul, endowed with qualities fitted for an eternal and better existence—endowed with a knowledge of true and false—cannot boast of any other merit than that of having remained free from the grosser crimes! Can the senseless stone expect immortal happiness; or the slothful servant who has hidden his Lord's talent in the earth, indulge hope of ever being entrusted with a higher charge?

How wretched, then, do you appear, unhappy man, in your lamentable self-deceit! You imagine that if you have not been adorned with conspicuous virtue, you are yet free from heavy sin. Behold! your thousand omissions of good are your thousand sins,—which call you to certain judgment. The awful hour will one day come, when you will tremble at your indifference to the countless good works, which you have suffered to remain undone. For indifference towards a virtue which we can practise, is indifference towards the Eternal who shall judge us—is indifference towards the Most Holy. Every opportunity for good which is set before us, is like an invitation of God to our hearts to consecrate that act to Him—it is the prayer of our good Angel that we should become more holy.

And how can I stand, then, Heavenly Father, in Thy glorious presence? Alas! if my days and hours be reckoned to me, and the sum of my good deeds drawn up beside them, how shall I abide it? However great Thy mercy may be, what claims or hopes can I have in a blessed eternity, in a more perfect state, when I have so often forfeited them by negligence and perverseness?

I acknowledge my weakness and my guilt before Thee. Yes,—I am a sinner, a far greater sinner than I have hitherto imagined myself to be. My

omissions are my transgressions—these press upon me, and I cannot justify them in Thy sight.

Nevertheless, I still live ! O God, merciful God ! Thy long-suffering has not yet deserted me—unworthy as I am. I yet live ! There is yet a series of days before me which I may spend in more than fruitless repentance, in which I may shew the power of a more virtuous, a more acceptable disposition. I live still—and look forward with joy to the moments which will give me an opportunity for thoughts, words, and deeds, that may contribute to the general happiness of my fellow-creatures. O Father, Thou demandest nothing which exceeds the power of Thy children ! Why should I not do willingly all that I am capable of doing ? O most merciful Father, forgive my omissions—**FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES.** Amen.

XIII.

APPEARANCE AND REALITY.

JAMES ii. 1—4.

“ My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool; are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?”

God is Supreme Wisdom! So we hear,—so we read, often without having any distinct idea of what, properly speaking, we are to understand by Supreme Wisdom.

God is Supreme Wisdom—but man should be the wisest among the creatures of God on earth. To this end has the Creator endowed us with the gift of reason. For this has divine revelation been given to the world by the mouth of the inspired messengers of Heaven. For this did God make Himself known to man by Jesus Christ.

And who then is a truly wise man ! The Christian should be one. Ah ! but is every Christian a wise man ? Wherefore is he not ?

What is the substance of wisdom ? It is the clear knowledge of the true, the good, and the becoming—it is the absence of all illusion, of all self-deceit, respecting the affairs of life.

The opposite to wisdom is folly ; and folly judges not of things according to what they are, that is, according to their *reality*, but allows itself to be blinded by their *appearance*. It permits itself to be misled by *the outside of objects*, and regards them as something different from what they are in point of fact. Hence is the old man commonly wiser than the inexperienced youth—the aged mother, than the daughter who is unacquainted with the world. Age is taught by experience, is brought through the school of error to a knowledge of the truth, and is preserved from many an illusion by repeated trial.

The fool estimates the worth of an individual only by his clothes, by his fortune, or by his office. The wise man values not any one by his externals ; but by his principles, his intelligence, and his actions. The fool considers him a pious Christian who diligently attends the house of God, and assumes the modest outward appearance of a religious person,—

who is accustomed to say prayers which he has learnt by heart,—who often reads in the Bible or some other serious book, and abstains from noisy pleasures. The wise man deems only him a Christian, who in all his thoughts and actions is full of charity ; who aids and assists wherever he can ; injures no one ; and thus, as it were, lives only in love—that is—in God. “ *By their fruits shall ye know them !*”

God is Supreme Wisdom. He cannot be deceived or blinded by any outward appearance. He knows the true worth of all things animate and inanimate. Before Him there is no respect of persons. In the balance of His justice the regal sceptre and the beggar’s staff are of equal weight. In His eyes that which is accidental is not regarded as essential.

But mortals, here below, long wander under the influence of illusion. It is the endeavour of every man to *appear better* than he is. He deceives others by this simulation. We know not what men are, but only what they appear to be. We bow before error, instead of truth. We consider only accidental, secondary qualities, instead of the main properties beneath them. We stand before painted sepulchres, but we see not the corruption and rottenness within.

The more justly a man appreciates people and

things around him, and the less he allows himself to be blinded by the appearance, by the good or bad outside—the wiser is the man.

The fundamental principle of wisdom is : *to separate the appearance from the reality ; to take things for what they actually are, and not for what they appear to be.*

This rule comprehends the sum of all wisdom. Whoever can adhere to it on all occasions is the wisest of men. We should impress it on our children, even in their tenderest youth : then will they unremittingly seek after wisdom—they will not take a phantom for a substance—they will not place their happiness in external things, but in the rectitude of their own heart—they will call the sweet poison of vice a poison still, however sweet it may be.

Let this rule guide him, who desires to become a wise man—from day to day. By this will he escape many of the numerous dangers, sufferings, and cares of life ; for it is error which makes us unhappy here below. It is our habit to look to the appearance of the world with needless disquietude ; we take no pains to understand it rightly ; we treat it and receive its treatment injudiciously. Hence arises our misery. We fear the shadow more than the substance ; we dread the fiction more than the

reality. We suffer more on account of the loss of imaginary good, than of eternal good.

This rule is the pillar of true Christianity, which is, indeed, the genuine wisdom of God revealed for the benefit of man. It is only by following this rule that man obtains a high intellectual power, and *moral greatness*. He raises himself above appearance and deceit; and sees the error of thousands. He acquires a *self-stability* which nothing else can give him. He knows in what earthly happiness and earthly unhappiness consist, and neither can deprive him of his peace of mind. He is not dependant upon chance; he rests only on that which is eternally true, eternally good, eternally blessed—he relies on God, and on the divine promises of future happiness, if his soul be fitted for the attainment of them. He acquires thereby that consistently religious character which denotes the disciple of Jesus. He enjoys the pleasures of life without considering them as more than a passing refreshment of the body. He endures every undeserved misfortune, as the accomplishment of the counsels of Divine Providence for his salvation.

He lives, like Christ, so as to raise himself above dust and vanity, and the desire of accumulating riches, which he must after a few years give back to the world. What the Eternal God is to the

boundless universe, that is he to man in his own little sphere of action here below. This is true Christianity—this is living unto God.

Separate the appearance from the reality in judging of your fellow-men. Withhold not, however, from the different ranks that homage of courtesy, which is paid and received in civil society ;—but give to virtue your admiration and love, wherever you find it, whether in the palace, or in the poorest hut. Look not upon the clothes, or the birth, or the family, or the station, or the fortune, or the rank of the man—but on his merits, on his superior qualities of mind and heart.

Condemn no one on account of appearances, before you know why he, whom you are inclined to blame, has acted in such a manner and not otherwise. Allow not yourself to be led by fair speeches into intimate friendship with any one, whose heart you do not know, and whose designs are strange to you. Consider not the measures of your higher authorities as unjust, so long as you have not an opportunity of examining their objects.

Whilst you thus hold communication with mankind, and every where seek for truth, your spirit itself will become addicted to truth, even as God is true. You will speak and act with openness and honour, yet not without caution towards those who

may abuse your candour. It will be far from your wish to appear before people better than your conscience warrants. It will be an abomination to you to deceive others respecting yourself; but you will earnestly desire to be accepted in the sight of God, who seeth in secret. (MATT. vi. 18.)

Separate the appearance from the reality. These words are the motto of your happiness, if you understand them rightly, and only fulfil their sense: and in order that you may understand them rightly, retrace your past life, and think on the days when you supposed yourself unhappy, and consequently were not contented with your situation. Whence arose the greater part of your discontent? Was it not often from your imagining that you could be happier, if you were in another situation—like this or that one of your acquaintance? or if you had greater possessions—or if you were not oppressed with cares—or if you could procure for yourself these or those pleasures? Have you not secretly wished for the fortune, the property, the connexions of another; and regretted that you did not prosper so well as he?

Ah! discontented friend, you judged by the *appearance*, and took it for *reality*. Those whom you have envied in the bottom of your heart, were perhaps more unhappy than you. Under gold and silk often dwell great sorrow and vexation. You

said indeed: 'What cause can these people have to be discontented? If they are unhappy it must be their own fault.' Well then, if you fail to be happy and contented—is not also your own folly to be blamed? You likewise have advantages and good fortune which are wanting to many others; and on account of which the poorer and the more humble envy you. 'Had I only,' so speaks one of *them*, 'had I only what *he* has, how happy could I be.'

With admirable wisdom God has assigned to every rank, to every age, its peculiar burden, its peculiar evils. Therefore envy no one—for the appearance deceives you, and you have no security whatever, that, under the same circumstances, you would not be more sensible of various difficulties and sorrows than the objects of your envy.

Separate the appearance from the reality—if ever you ardently desire any thing which you suppose to be the chief good of life. Take heed of considering that as perfect good which pleases and flatters your imagination, so long as you have it not—but which may be indifferent to you when you are in possession of it. Take heed to yourself, not to fancy that the greatest happiness, which may now appear enchanting, but yet is far from capable of rendering all the hours of your pilgrimage joyful hours. Take heed how you deem that

the most desirable good, of which in old age you may lose all enjoyment ; or of which the rapacious hands of men, or the calamities of war, may rob you—and of the permanent possession of which you are never for a day secure.

Does the hope of great riches and acquisitions fill your mind ? What would heaps of gold profit you, if you should suffer envy and persecution on account of your possessions ? What would the silken cushion avail, if you should languish, as an invalid, upon it ? What, all the splendour and pomp of wealth, if you lose your best beloved friends by the grasp of death ? Can your good things console you ? Will your riches sweeten the hour of dissolution, perhaps already near at hand ?

Does, by chance, the expectation of greater honours transport you ? Why do you regard the glittering outside ? Were you even, in fact, more worthy of higher honours than another, would you supplant one who has deserved well ? Does not the malice of the world chiefly attach itself to those who enjoy distinction and pre-eminence ? Is not the shadow darkest, where the brightest light falls upon the object ? Are not vexation and cares intimately connected with the responsibility of loftier stations ? Wherefore is it, that men of high office, harassed with fatigue and bustle, are so often desirous of returning to the enviable tranquillity of a

middle rank ? Why have even princes been known to relinquish their crowns, that they might live in unnoticed solitude ?

Separate the appearance from the reality—and hold only that as supremely good which does not glitter ; but which much more certainly secures your happiness—which is able in wealth or poverty, in high dignity or humble station, in the plenitude of health or the pains of sickness, in the vigour of youth or the infirmity of age, to procure for you at all times substantial pleasure, deep, inward peace and self-contentedness, the honour and respect of good and bad, of high and low ;—that which affords you a certainty of being acceptable to the Eternal, Most Holy God. And how do we call this *supreme good*,—this treasure more precious than a regal throne, more valuable than mines of gold ? It is CHRISTIAN WISDOM—a resemblance to God in mind and conduct, a tranquil religiousness of heart. Of this good, no storm of life will ever rob you : it perishes not with the bloom of youth—it is perfected in the kingdom of God, where only righteous spirits dwell, where God alone rules, and the happiness of its inhabitants is unchangeable. “*Seek first the kingdom of God.*” (MATT. vi. 33.) Worldly honours, earthly possessions are not even auxiliary means for the attainment of this supreme good—but in the hands of wise and godly men, they are instruments for the promoting of useful and bene-

ficial purposes. Thus is the whole universe of God only the instrument of the Eternal for the beatification of the spirits created by Him. What an inspiring thought is this—a thought which raises us above the world, the dust, and the grave ! Here are reality and truth—no more appearance and self-deception. How can the human soul, if it only once obtain a knowledge of this substantial good, further trouble itself with empty shadows, which scarcely arise before they vanish ?

Separate the appearance from the reality, by acquiring a just judgment of the value of life, and of the purpose to which you believe yourself to be appointed in the world.

Ah ! how remote from the communion of true Christians live most of those who call themselves Disciples of Jesus Christ. They enter the world—they are educated for a profession—they choose that profession—they labour in it—they live only by and for the profit which they derive from it—they think scarcely of any thing else—they rejoice if they succeed in it ;—they become old—they cannot enjoy any longer what they have acquired with pains—they leave it behind them on Earth—they give up the ghost !

This is the history of most men. They confound the accidental with the true—the transitory with the eternal. They live for the earthly, as if they should never live again.

But if man be ordained to no other purpose here below, than to live in a sorrowful fleeting dream for fifty or sixty years—for a good which neither belongs nor remains to him—for pleasures which pass away more quickly than they come: truly, for such a life it were not worth while to be born; and it would have been better for multitudes of mortals if they had never existed. But does not this fleeting, this transitory state of our existence warn us loudly, every hour of our lives, of what is true and lasting? The divinely created man is spirit, and is immortal in God's everlasting creation. Here shall he cultivate his talents in weal and woe, in light and shade, for his future perfection. He is not to live for earthly purposes, but for his immortal soul. He belongs by his nature to no corporeal world—but to a world of spirits. To this the hand of God beckons him upwards—to this the voice of Jesus calls him. Why do we not listen to the words of the good Shepherd?

I hear Thy voice, O Jesus, heavenly Teacher! I see, O Father of mercies, Thy beckoning hand! Upwards, upwards to perfection, to a state of glory dost Thou summon me! I will not chain myself to this earthly spot. Inasmuch as with my body I belong to this lower world, so far am I connected with it, do I live to it: yet my soul struggles upwards to Thee and Thy glorious spirits—it belongs

to that Eternity, on which it has already entered, and of which life after death is only the continuation—to an Eternity, wherein the most righteous, the most holy, shall stand nearest to Thee—to an Eternity which Thou hast prepared for those that love Thee from the foundation of the world—and for the perfect enjoyment of which they must be fitted through *Christian wisdom*.

Let this wisdom now direct my mind—for it proceeds from Thee! Thou didst once reveal it through Jesus Christ, and Thou dost still reveal it through the medium of reason to all mortals in a greater or less degree.

Sometimes do I labour here below under gross illusions—often, indeed, do I take error for truth, evil for good, the vain for the important. Alas! the spirit of man how weak it is? If my desires and wishes become vehement, if my powerful propensities lead me, I know not whither—then will I stop short—then will I ask myself: ‘Whither do you rush so impetuously? Prefer the peace of your mind to all other things. No happiness is greater than this—never forfeit it—even for the most splendid price.’ Then shall I separate the appearance from the reality; and learn to be more contented and more happy.

O God, grant me Thy power—grant me Thy blessing! Amen.

XIV.

THE CONFLICT OF DUTIES.

MATT. xxii. 37—40.

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets!"

THERE is but *one* Christianity ; although there be in the Christian Church various opinions, parties, and sects, with regard to matters of Faith.

There is but one Christianity; and he who would be a professor of it—who would become a *true* Christian, must know how to unite in himself the two chief branches of religion, *Faith and Works*.

Works without faith are as little able to save mankind, as faith without works.

He who fulfils all his duties with strict conscientiousness ; who does no harm to his brethren; who is agreeable, beneficent, and useful to every one that is placed in connexion with him; who even nobly sacrifices himself to the general good—and

yet has not faith, is to be pitied : for he is in truth a miserable being while he lives on earth,—tortured by doubts of every kind, and looking on the future with an unsteady eye. The believing Christian alone has a never-failing source of consolation in his breast—trust in Divine Revelation. The believing Christian alone has, through Jesus, courage in every change and chance of life, and cheerfulness in death. His faith and love raise him above the pressure of sublunary trouble, and impart to him that sublime confidence, which was wanting even to the wisest of the Heathens. It is only through the light of this pious faith, that the dark nights of his fate clear up ; the system of the universe is expounded to him ; the riddles of this earthly dream are solved ; and there appears to him a Deity, loving all, caring for all, directing all by His wisdom, and blessing all with his grace and bounty ; to whom we are permitted to cry, as the children of heaven, Abba Father ! It is only through the word and blood of Jesus, that the precious pledge of the eternity of man's salvation, of the mercy of the All-gracious, and of the joys of a better world, after this perishable state, is imparted to the Christian. It is only by his religious Faith, that he is enabled to resist the storms of the world ; and is at all times armed against the rebellion of his own passions. The most virtuous principles and resolutions have

no firm ground but this, and may easily be shaken if built on any other—for how powerful is the charm of seduction and example, and how weak is oftentimes our reason, when it is not supported by sound religious Faith !

But just as little as works, without faith in the Revelation of our Lord, are able to make us truly happy—even so is faith in Jesus unless it worketh by love.

There are, indeed, found, in the present day, as in the time of our Redeemer, far more men who hope to be saved through a bare faith, through merely uttering, “ Lord, Lord ;” through the observance of outward devotional exercises ; through the stated offering of prayers ; or through the excitation of religious feelings—than there are men who practically adopt Christ’s doctrines of salvation, in virtuous deeds and thoughts, without believing in Him.

It is easier for the man who is slow to good, to speak good *words*, than to perform good *actions*. It is easier to him to observe *outward customs*, than to combat *inward criminal* inclinations. It is easier for him to rely on the intercession of saints, and the prayers of the pious,—upon the merits and the righteousness of Jesus,—than to do the will of his Father in Heaven, and to become perfect even as He is perfect. Men speak freely of the

wounds of Jesus ; but to crucify their own flesh and its desires, that is, to put a restraint on their inclination to lust, to avarice, to ambition, to envy, to drunkenness, to calumny, to hatred—this does not so readily occur to them.

But, it is not your observance of devotional exercises ; not external decorum ; not the indulgence of pleasant religious feelings ; not the saying of ‘ Lord, Lord ;’ not the “ flying for refuge to the wounds of Jesus,” and the use of other figurative expressions, which afford no clear idea :—it is not all this, or other fictitious aids, which can secure eternal happiness : but, says Jesus Christ, those who *do the will of my Father in Heaven* are acceptable to God. Not by their words, by their inclinations, by their declarations, but “ *by their fruits,*” that is by their deeds, “ *ye shall know them.*” (MATT. vii. 20, 21.)

It is true, the holy Apostles recommended Faith, in their writings to the Christian community at that time, and speak of it as the foundation of Christianity, of their hopes of salvation. Of the righteousness of faith,—of the fruitfulness of the Gospel,—of the merit of the sacrifice of Jesus, they speak even more explicitly than Jesus Christ himself had done. But their object was first to convert Heathens and Jews to the Christian Religion. Upon these, who like the Galatians often fell away, they

were obliged particularly to inculcate faith in Jesus: yet they did not neglect to preach, with equal force, the other principles of the Christian Religion. After they had explained in the first part of their epistles the doctrines of faith, then, in the conclusion of their writings, they urge most expressly the deeds or works of godliness. They named, they represented courageously, the series of vices which at that time were prevalent, and placed the Christian virtues in opposition to them. They exhorted to faith and to the love of God,—but they solemnly declared, that, “*this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.*” (1 JOHN v. 3.)

In this, then, the true imitation of Jesus consists, that, as being born of God, we conquer the world, that is, our earthly, evil inclinations; and act with love and friendship towards mankind, as Jesus has loved, and still does love, each one of *us*.—“For if a man say, *I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.*” (1 JOHN iv. 20.) If we are to perform our duties as citizens, as fathers and mothers, as husbands, wives, or children, it will often cost us hard contests with ourselves, especially if our self-love happen to be in question. It is in this contest that we are to conquer, and to show forth our Christianity.

Many an one says, ‘I do what I can, and no

one can expect more of me. I give of my superfluity to the poor, but I cannot rob myself and mine of every pleasure and convenience.' Very well,—but if in days of general want, you should deprive yourself of a part of these conveniences, and could support a poor family, and preserve them from beggary ; would not your conscience tell you that you have done a truly christian-like deed ?

Another says : ' I will pardon my enemy, who, I know, speaks evil of me, who seeks every where to supplant and vilify me ; who would hurt me if he could : I will pardon him, but let no one desire that I should caress him, that I should sacrifice myself for a man, who would only sneer if he saw me sinking to the ground.' Very well,—you should and may conduct yourself with prudence towards your enemy ; but does this justify you in breaking out into imprecations against him ? Does this justify you in feeling malicious joy, if any thing untoward occurs to him, and in saying : ' He has deserved it of me ?' Does it justify you in doing nothing, if it be in your power, to benefit him, even without his knowing it ? Oh ! hide yourself weak man, and do not be proud of your religion, of your faith, of your prayers, of your hopes in the merits and righteousness of Christ—you are not His disciple, you are no Christian—you have no part or lot in Him.

But men are in the habit of voluntarily *deceiving themselves*, if they neglect the performance of a duty, with the excuse, that they had *other duties* to perform. Thus do they make one duty as it were the destroyer of others; and, in truth, only present an offering to their *self-love* and *vanity*. They are like the Pharisees, who in order rigidly to sanctify the Sabbath, would, for the honour of God, allow the unfortunate to suffer, rather than assist them, at the hazard of profaning their day of rest. (MATT. xii. 1—12.)

But yet it may happen to the most pious and virtuous Christian, in the performance of one duty, to run the risk of omitting another, which is just as sacred. This *conflict of duties* often excites in tender minds the most painful struggle. But quiet reflection on these weighty concerns soon sets us at rest, and clear conviction removes all doubt.

What are we to do in the conflict of duties, which oppose one another; where we cannot perform the one without neglecting the other?

The simple and concise answer to this important question will be of great value to many tender, Christian minds, which now suffer much embarrassment. For it will enlighten us respecting the scale of our obligations, and teach us to be upon the watch against the suggestions of our eloquent self-love.

But the answer is implied in the words of Jesus. He teaches us to *love God above all things, and then our neighbour as ourselves.* (MATT. xxii. 37—40.)

Higher, too, than the laws of man are the ordinances of God. No mortal, no government, no monarch, should dare to ordain or command any thing which is contradictory to the precepts of God. And should a tyrant presume or wish to overthrow the divinely appointed order of things,—should any mortal attempt to compel you to commit a crime against God, then is the choice no longer difficult : *you must obey God rather than man !*

The holy lives of the Christians of the first centuries, afford us numberless examples of the fidelity to God of the primitive disciples. They sacrificed friends and relations, property, office, riches, honours, country, yea, even life itself, if a tyrant wished to compel them to renounce their Master, or to embrace a different religion. *We should obey God rather than man.* For this cause many virtuous young women lost their lives rather than their innocence, through the command of an unfeeling barbarian. You should obey God rather than man ;—therefore withhold obedience from that man, who would induce you to commit a sin.

Yet, thanks be to Heaven, we have but seldom in our days, and especially in Christian lands, to

contend against such commands, as are opposed to God, to nature, and to reason. We have far more occasion to carry on an intestine warfare against our self-love, when it undertakes to allay the strife between conflicting duties. I, therefore, return to the other half of the saying of Christ.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." I have consequently no just cause for preference of myself above others. As much as I love myself, even so am I to love others. On this holy foundation, which Jesus himself has laid, rest now my obligations in the *conflict of duties*.

First be just towards others, and then liberal towards yourself; that is, first do towards others that which they have a right to look for and receive at your hand—and then do that which brings advantage to yourself. Deprive no one of his bread, to procure yourself superfluities; let no one hunger, that you may not suffer a diminution of your conveniences; but give to every one his due: thus are you merely just to him,—and so far cannot be called gratuitously good or beneficent.

First be just towards others, then liberal to yourself; silence first the most pressing need of your neighbour—then make yourself happy with your superabundance. First clothe the naked—then allow yourself elegant garments and handsome furniture; first do justice to the merits of others—then

enjoy the superior advantages which you possess ; first soothe the pain and sufferings of others—and then grant yourself your reasonable pleasures. What is necessary to others, what is indispensable to others, that must you first procure them—then may you indulge yourself with what is less necessary, and with things with which you might dispense. Think that you are in their condition, and what demands you would make on the humanity and justice of your brethren. Whatever, then, you would desire that they should do to you, do you to them.

Be just towards yourself, before you are liberal to others. You should love others as yourself, but you should also love yourself as others. If you incautiously sacrifice your honour, your good name, and the esteem which you are justified in demanding, in order to afford gratification to others, and they thus degrade you into an object of their derision—then are you unjust to yourself, for the sake of being indulgent to them. If you neglect your own necessary business, to serve others in things, with which in fact they might well dispense—then are you unjust to yourself, in order to augment the abundance of others. If you lessen the fortune which is necessary to the maintenance, and consistent mode of life, of yourself, your family, and children, in order to make presents to others, who

are not so greatly in want of them—then are you unjust towards yourself and your family ; you are, with the best design, a squanderer, for the benefit of those who would not starve without your aid. If you modestly step back whilst another desires an office, to which you are competent, and if that man have already employment and bread, while you and yours still suffer want—then is your modesty an injustice to yourself ; since you give him the advantage who already has enough, and wants it less than you.

This, then, is the simple rule—always first to perform what is needful, indispensable, and just ; and then to do to ourselves and others, what is fair, what is kind, what is liberal. This rule, if we pursue it with prudence, will always lead us to *the best choice in the conflict of duties*.

But since we are to love others as ourselves, hence arises the following duty : *that where we can effect a decided advantage to several others, we must postpone our own interest*. Each man is only a part of human society ; he must willingly in case of need, sacrifice himself for the whole ; and not expect that the whole should be sacrificed for a part.

Willingly and joyfully, therefore, should the Christian, when the commonwealth is in danger, disregard his own security ; if the country need his

support, he is with readiness to pay such contributions and taxes as may be demanded. Yes ;—he should by his patriotic example arouse others ; he should, if his native land be menaced with ruin, and require his arm for its defence, willingly take part in its protection, and be prepared to purchase its welfare with his blood.

Therefore are ye revered in all ages, and in all countries, ye exalted men, ye who have courageously offered, as a sacrifice for the happiness of your contemporaries, yourselves and your best possessions ! Therefore do we extol your names, dear heroes ! ye who have rushed to a glorious death for your country's sake ! Therefore do our hymns commemorate you, ye holy men, ye who bore witness to the truth of religion with your life, and sealed its value with your blood.

O God ! let me also, in the hour of severe trial, exhibit this Christian heroism ! Far from my heart be the cold vanity, the mean self-love, which will not permit a man to be useful to others, unless he can gain advantage for himself ; which knows of no sacrifice of self ; which values gold above virtue, and worldly honour above innocence and holiness of mind.

XV.

MAN AND HIS ACTIONS.

PROVERBS xvi. 3.

“Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.”

It is in vain! We labour and strive after improvement, and struggle against the stream of events: the waves of life beat high against us, and overpower, alas! often too easily, our strength and courage. How many hundred projects have I not formed since my childhood; how many thousand wishes have impelled me to a thousand various actions! And what has become of the hundred projects, the thousand wishes! Often has one day, perhaps, seen them originate and vanish—often have I borne them in my mind firmly and perseveringly from one year to the next; and at length, when I thought the long-desired good to be at hand, some little circumstance, in itself insignificant, threw me far back; and sighing, I gave up the hope which had for years delighted and deceived me.

If I retrace the sweet hours of my childhood, oh how different then was all! How fervently did I long to be but this or that, or to have this or that! Of a thousand hopes, not one came to pass; one supplanted another; blossoms smiled in abundance—but one gentle breath of heaven, and the bloom fell off. I look around in vain for the fruits.

And I grew older, and my conceptions became more animated; new desires arose in my breast: more brilliant plans were formed, and adorned with all the magic, of which a warm imagination is capable. Look at the damsel, how she loses herself in silent dreams of her future life, and strives after the accomplishment of her secret wishes. Behold the youth, who, with a high feeling of his power and freedom, sees the whole world and the glory of it lie open before him, and thinks that he is able to grasp it all. Then by the side of those who are still happy in their imagination, behold the maturer man, the wife, and the mother. They pursue their course, already more seriously and calmly, amidst the seed which they have sown, of which thousands died in the germ, thousands grew up, to be snapped off by an unexpected storm before their maturity. Ah! of the children which should have been their pride, already the most beloved lie in their graves; of the friends, with whom they thought to spend a happy life, more than the half have already disap-

peared from their side ; of the reputation, of the prosperity, of the sphere of action, upon which they reckoned, has scarcely a shadow appeared.

The old man goes on to the limit of his days with resignation. He looks but unwillingly behind him. The past is the land of disappointment, the future the land of hope. He stretches forward his view over life, to that place where disappointments must end. He says : ‘ I had once the strength of a lion ; I had gigantic courage ; I had foresight, and unbending perseverance—but my best wishes were frustrated, and my actions produced entirely different consequences, from those which I expected of them.

‘ It is true, that it appears not to be the case with all men, as it is with me. It appears that many have their desires fulfilled—have accomplished what they proposed, and are become what they wished to be. But, when I examine more closely the circumstances of their life, I perceive with astonishment, that they themselves contributed the least to that which they have effected ; that often, entirely contrary to their views, they have been led to things, which have afterwards turned out to their advantage ; that nature and mankind have, as it were, co-operated to enrich and exalt them,—to raise their reputation, rank, power, and influence ; whilst others who were before far more powerful,

rich, and honoured than themselves, have seen all their power and fortune wrecked, and have fallen from their eminence.'

It is commonly observed, how dissimilar the consequences of human actions are, and how mortals are frequently compelled to take a course entirely different from that which they would willingly select:—and this observation has at all times employed the reflection and attention of mankind. Many people of antiquity, with imperfect conceptions of the Godhead, believed in a blind and severe Fate, which ruled in human affairs, and which directed the occurrences of heaven and earth. They believed in a Fate, which, without knowing or caring for the merits or demerits of men and their designs, arbitrarily sported with them, as with mere machines, destitute of free will.

Very differently does the better-informed Christian judge—being in possession of a more sublime and perfect knowledge of God, the all-wise and mighty Lord of the universe. It is no blind fate, which, without knowledge or design, trifles with the weal and woe of men; but a supreme and unlimited wisdom, which wonderfully controls the whole as well as the part, the lot of the least worm, as well as that of the greatest people—in order that all may be well sustained, and moral agents be led onward to greater perfection of existence.

Man has nothing in his power but himself—nothing, but himself. Even that indeed which is most closely connected with him, his body,—is scarcely at all times in his power. Himself—his soul—alone belongs to man. The soul alone has will. It alone can command itself. It can determine to think according to its better intelligence, according to the suggestions of its reason—to will and to act according to the eternal laws of God ;—or to do the contrary of all this, and to yield to the charms of sensual inclinations. But more than itself the human soul has not in its power. Thought belongs to it, will belongs to it, action belongs to it ; but the consequences of the action lie without it. A man casts his action on the stream of life ; where it becomes the sport of a thousand little waves bearing it along, the force and direction of which he cannot calculate. Of many things which he undertakes—of many, whereon he has expended the most trouble and consideration, and from which he promised himself the most fortunate results, he reaps the most insignificant advantage. Oftentimes, on the other hand, that whereon he did not in the least depend, and which he executed negligently, often without any particular view, brings forth the most unexpected fruit ; and is reckoned to him by the crowd of men who judge of actions, not according to the intention, but according to their conse-

quences, either as a great merit, or as a lamentable failing.

Thus are a man and his will very different from his outward actions and their consequences. If the deed lay as much in his power as his will, he would be even like God himself.

But there is a God independent of us! He rules, where our power does not reach. He directs circumstances, accidents, and destinies. We, with infinitely limited foresight, are obliged to act, like a blind man in the whirl of things around him, without knowing what will arise out of our actions. It is not the consequence, which ennobles our action, but the will with which we perform it; the good design gives it worth: for the rest we can have no security—no mortal can with certainty answer for the event.

Oh how often have I deceived myself, therefore, in judging of my own value according to the fortunate or unfortunate effects of that which I had done! How could I so much deceive myself, when I was already persuaded of the real truth by my own frequent experience! How could I boast of my views, of my powers; that this or that had succeeded with me, notwithstanding that by the slightest accident, which I could neither anticipate nor turn aside, all would have been far otherwise! Wherefore do I so foolishly and short-sightedly

wonder at the seemingly astonishing deeds of men, when the extraordinary effects of their undertakings are not their own work, but the work of a Power which controls the destiny of all. An unprecedented storm annihilates the greatest fleets ; a frost forms bridges across lakes and streams, so that the hostile army passes over ; an unseen accident betrays the most secret plans of princes, and frustrates their designs ; an occurrence of a trifling description puts an end to the life of rulers, and changes the fate of nations. Who can see beforehand, what the next quarter of an hour will bring to light ? As it is with the greatest, so is it with the smallest.

How often have I deceived myself, notwithstanding the knowledge of these truths, in the forming an opinion of other men, whilst I judged of their good or bad character from the effects of their outward actions ! Have I not myself often been taught by experience, that much, which sprang from impure views, at length had the most beneficial consequences ; and that much operated prejudicially which this or that man thought, spoke, and did, with the best design ?

For the future, then, I will be more circumspect in my judgment of others, as I must wish also, on my part, not to be judged of by others according to the consequences of my steps. A man is answerable for nothing except the will, which accom-

panies his deed : whatever may follow from it, is the work and under the direction of the providence of God.

Therefore, in all my future undertakings, I will say, with Solomon, "*Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.*" (PROV. xvi. 3.) Act according to the will of God, in the highest Christian sense : what comes of it, is the affair of God. You, of yourself, can do nothing—all depends upon His blessing.

What, then, is the blessing of God, by which we wish to see our actions attended ? Is it the success of our designs ? Oh, no ! if our views always succeeded, it would be often a great bane, both to other men and to ourselves. Does the blessing of God consist, then, in the fulfilment of our wishes ? Certainly not ;—for how foolish are often the wishes of short-sighted men, and how often do we thank Heaven long after, when we find, that the exact fulfilment of our former wishes would have wrought our total destruction !

The blessing of God which attends our words and works, is shown in the salutary effects, which our endeavours have, as well for the happiness of our fellow-creatures, as for the peace of our own souls. Thus the wise man sees the blessing of God, not only in the fulfilment, but also in the failure of the wishes he has entertained. He venerates the Pro-

vidence which does not suffer that to come to pass, which even with the best wishes of short-sighted man to do good, would have tended to general evil. He who torments himself about frustrated wishes, does he not blame the acts of Providence ? He who has not seen the consequences proceed from his actions which he had expected, and thence becomes angry ; does he not stand as a censurer of the sanctifying and world-blessing government of the Most High ?

Design and will are yours ;—the deed and consequences are in the hands of God ! Rest then every thing upon the goodness of your will, not upon the operations of your power ; every thing upon the wisdom of the Most High, nothing upon the excellency of your views and projects. The plans which were torn from you, the hopes which were destroyed to your seeming disadvantage, were torn and destroyed for your substantial good.

Every thing depends upon the blessing of God ! How much more deeply do I feel this truth, the longer I live and the more I gain experience. But this truth must not lead me into new errors ; it must not induce me to think or say : ‘ Since, then, I can do nothing of myself, I will leave the case to God. Why should I exert my faculties ?—Why should I work without intermission—why torment

myself with troubles of all kinds ? It is all in vain. If God will bless me and my doings, then will He cause the least seed which I sow in the field to bear me fruit an hundred fold ; and if I am not to reap it, then will one single hail shower destroy all my golden hopes, all the fruits of my cares and exertions in a moment.'

The thoughtless and the indolent man, says within himself : ' Every thing depends on the blessing of God !'—and so justifies to himself his own thoughtlessness and distaste for work. Deceive not yourselves ; God is not mocked !

In order to hope for the blessing of God upon our actions, we must act. If the Lord is to bless your harvest, you must have sown. But if you would reap good fruit, you must sow no weeds. If your will was bad : how can you expect to gather the reward of righteous deeds ? The blessing of God is the good effect which necessarily follows our deeds, if they agree with the laws of the government of the world, and with existing circumstances. If our actions be in opposition to the Divine Ordinances, and to those circumstances, which He has placed around us, then will failure certainly ensue—and mischief to ourselves and others.

If you care for this blessing of God on your undertakings, then enter on none without the best

and purest will, to effect what is good and useful. Expect from the all-loving Father no approbation, and from His government no assistance, if, full of hatred towards your fellow-men, you entertain purposes of revenge. And if, notwithstanding, affairs prosper with you, do not suppose that it is conducive to your happiness. You have hurt others, yourself most. Would you desire the blessing of God—desire it not for unworthy objects.

Yet even the best and purest will accompanying our actions is not sufficient to secure for them the approbation of God, and their success. We must also beware, that this, our good intention, agrees with the relations and circumstances which surround us. They too are the work of God and the dispensations of His will. Therefore has our heavenly Father given us understanding, that before we begin our undertaking, we may be able properly to inform ourselves of the circumstances under which we have to act; that we may sufficiently prove them, and reckon what assistance, or what hindrance, they promise to us. He who acts in defiance of all relations and circumstances is like a madman who rushes perversely against the iron bars which confine him;—he who, in spite of the goodness of his will, acts thoughtlessly and inconsiderately, has to ascribe it to himself, if that which he does brings him more harm than advan-

tage. For he neglects to observe the will of God, which is clearly explained with regard to the present relations of life. He is like the unwise man, who in order to wash himself, springs into the eddying whirlpool of a stream, and hopes for the assistance of God in the peril which his own imprudence has occasioned.

When you have full persuasion of the goodness of your will, and are sure that by your own design you will cause unhappiness and loss to no man ;—when you have carefully calculated and arranged your project, according to existing circumstances, so that you know whether your means suffice, whether you do not build too much upon things which you do not understand :—then commend your work to the Lord—so will your design prosper. Not till then may you hope for the blessing of the Most High ; and it shall assuredly attend you, if the accomplishment of your project will truly work your welfare.

For however deep the human eye can penetrate into the infinitely intricate play of occurrences and possibilities ; and however accurately human prudence can weigh, reckon, arrange and use what it knows—they still remain circumscribed, and perceive not a thousand occurrences, which may spring up from the lap of the next hour. The undertaking even of the most prudent man, still lies in the

power of God—and the consequences of his action can no mortal ascribe to himself as his own merit. They are disposed by an all-directing Providence.

Therefore, if your aim be pure, your reflection mature, so far as your judgment reaches—then go and act and commend your work to the Lord with that confidence which befits the wise man in the goodness of the universal Father. Your will is good; but the will of the Most Wise is better.

“Father in Heaven, not my will, but thine be done.” Thus prayed Jesus my Saviour to Thee: thus I too will pray. And if my will agree with Thine, and thereby produce consequences beneficial to myself and others:—Oh, let it not make me proud of my power and prudence—for how futile are they! But let it rejoice my heart, and stimulate me to meditate on Thy designs for the happiness of myself and others. And when in other things Thou dost not bless my labours; when my sighs are in vain—my cares, my endeavours useless: then shall not this discourage me, nor make me doubt of Thy tender love and mercy. For that the thing which I purposed does not come to pass, is also of Thy love and mercy—and an evil befalling me, attended by the frustration of my plans, is often a blessing sent from Thee!—Oh, how many blessings does Thy paternal goodness bestow upon me, without my knowing or

suspecting it ! Truly, my heart may bleed, when I suddenly see the joys and hopes of a long period brought to nothing,—when I see the unspeakable pains and trouble which I have taken, lost without fruit for ever,—when my most ardent and dearest wishes remain uncompleted, and the dreaded opposites to them become my lot. But when my heart bleeds—then, O God, shall my spirit glorify and praise Thee ! my eye shall thankfully, confidently, and smilingly turn to Thee, amidst its painful tears ; for Thou art God, my God ! In Thee alone are wisdom and mercy—from Thee alone flow all blessings on the creature : and that which is doubted at the present moment will be praised with adoring gratitude in the following year—for “ **THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER AND EVER.**” Amen.

XVI.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR ?

LUKE X. 29.

" But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour ?"

" Who is my neighbour ?" asked a lawyer once of Jesus, who was then engaged instructing His Disciples. And, *' who is my neighbour ?'* asks of himself, in private, many a Christian in the present day, with as much doubt upon the subject as the Lawyer manifested.

' Is it that beggar,' asks the proud, rich man, *' to whom, in compassion I throw my alms upon the road, that he may not further trouble me ? I will give him alms ; but who in earnest expects of me, that I should love him as my brother—share with him—and hold intercourse with him, as my brother ? I know no neighbour, but one who is of my own rank, and of equal birth : whoever is of lower station is no relative of mine.'*

' Is it the inhabitant of distant islands and remote quarters of the globe ?' asks the sneering unbeliever :

‘ Truly my heart is too small to entertain so large a love, as that which is to embrace the whole human race. I can neither advise, nor serve my neighbour beyond the seas ; and I am quite satisfied with loving as neighbours my good friends around me !’

‘ Is it the Heathen or the Jew ?’ cries the zealot. ‘ How can I love him as my neighbour, who neither worships God in the same manner, nor loves Him as I do ? How can I consider him as my neighbour who dissents from my religion ; and will not stand so near to Jesus Christ as I ? He only who believes like a Christian, as I do, can be my neighbour.’

‘ Is it the man in the ranks of an enemy’s army ?’ asks the soldier. ‘ How shall I love him whom I am bound to put to death ; who, if I did not destroy him, would plunge my native land in confusion, and my family in distress ? It is my profession to slay him in battle, or to drag him away with me as a prisoner. He only is my neighbour, who is my fellow-citizen, who obeys the same laws and magistrates, and in time of need sacrifices his blood and property for our common preservation. Every one else is a stranger to me.’

‘ Is it the gross malefactor ?’ asks the judge. ‘ It is my duty not to love the transgressor, but to punish him. Can I love him as my brother, whom

in justice I must condemn to death? Can I pardon him as a brother, who would only use his liberty to render insecure the life and property of his fellow-creatures? He is like a wild beast, which must be put out of the way:—but such a man is not my neighbour.'

Thus every one forms a different idea of him whom he must call his neighbour. It is true, every one does not declare his thoughts aloud—but most people discover them by the manner in which they behave towards other men.

Who then is my neighbour? Jesus Christ answered the lawyer by one of the most striking parables recorded in the sacred writings. (LUKE x. 30—37.)

An orthodox Jew was robbed on his way by ruffians, and left for dead. There a *priest* found him—a priest whose duty it was to teach the Law of God, given at Sinai. He knew the Law: '*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*' (LEV. xix. 18.) But the Teacher practised not the Divine Word: he passed by hard-heartedly, on the other side; and left the unfortunate man bathed in blood. Then came a *Levite*, one of those who boasted of themselves that God had set them apart as His own hereditary portion;—for which reason they were especially obliged to serve Him. He also passed by on the other side. He knew not that

the object of compassion before him was his neighbour. At length there came a Samaritan ; and he saw the Jew. But the Jew and the Samaritan were in bitter dissension : they hated one another, on account of civil and religious differences. Yet the traveller saw in the Jew lying on the road, not a civil, not a religious adversary—but a MAN. Full of tenderness and benevolence, the Samaritan, when he had bound up his wounds, placed him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn—gave him in charge, and defrayed the expenses of his recovery. This person knew who was his neighbour. He demonstrated his knowledge by an act of mercy.

And thus has Jesus Christ, in His supreme Wisdom, taught the doubter who his neighbour is :—That it is every man who stands within our reach—every man with whom we come in contact, in such a way as that we may be useful or beneficial to him.

The inhabitant of the most distant part of the world is our neighbour, whether he be a white man or a black man, without any civil distinction, so long as he comes near enough for us to be of service to him. The God who created him, is no other than the same who created me. God has created him to no other end than that for which He created me. The human race, as it dwells around

the whole circuit of the globe, is one single family—of which God is the eternal, the loving Father. And every member of this family, coming into closer contact with me, is my brother or my sister—my neighbour.

So also is the professor of another religion, be he denominated whatever he may, I may, by all means, believe my own Faith to be more holy, more blessed than his :—he may, equally, despise my religious persuasion. But he is my neighbour : and I show him the divine principle of my Faith by this—that notwithstanding his ignorance and hatred, I respect him as a child of God, and treat him with the same love as God manifests towards all mankind, and as our Divine Saviour Jesus Christ has taught us to feel.

Thus, likewise, it is not only each of my fellow-citizens, but even the enemy of my country, who is my neighbour. It is true, I am bound to defend the rights of my country against foreign attacks, and not patiently to suffer the honour of my government, the constitution of my native land, the life and possessions of my fellow-citizens, to be affected by hostile outrage :—but still I owe mercy to a vanquished enemy, compassion to the disarmed. I must take care, therefore, to prevent him from doing injury : if this be effectually secured, I have only then to love him. I have a sacred duty to perform

in support of the rights of my fellow-subjects ; but still I have one as sacred to fulfil towards mankind, even in the person of an enemy. He is my neighbour :—I should therefore assist and serve him whenever it can be done without the violation of higher duties.

Thus is it, also, not only my relative by consanguinity, who is to be considered as my brother ; but the rival of my wishes, the adversary of my family, my bitterest personal opponent, who, full of animosity on his part, seeks every opportunity to afflict me. It is, indeed, my duty to place my rights and those of my family in security against external violence—but not to use revenge. It is, indeed, a duty to ward off from myself injury of every kind—but not to do mischief to others. I should love my enemy as my neighbour. *Christ requires it.* I cease to be a Christian, if I follow not the direction of my Divine Instructor.

When people are at length convinced, that every man is their neighbour—they yet often appear uncertain, how the love, with which they should love him, must be qualified. They feel as if it were very unnatural to have the same feelings of cordial affection towards all men. They know that it is impossible to force the inclination of the mind, so as to regard one man equally with another.

In the degrees of affection, there assuredly pre-

vails a great and essential difference. We embrace the old man with one kind of love—the child with another; with another the friend,—with another the stranger guest,—with another the brother or the sister,—with another the father or the mother—the husband or the wife. Whoever should wish to make all men his bosom-friends, would have no bosom-friend. Whoever should wish to live alike on a footing of confidence with every one indiscriminately, would soon forfeit the confidence of all.

The words of our Divine Master may well alarm the selfish man who can love and honour nothing but himself—who for his own convenience, for his fame, for the increase of his possessions, is capable of sacrificing brother and sister, friends and fellow-citizens, country—every thing.

By these words, moreover, the benevolent person may be thrown into some perplexity—for he would willingly follow the precept of Jesus, and yet knows the impossibility of esteeming every one as himself. Nevertheless, the Divine Word remains eternally true—and the accomplishment of it is alone capable of diffusing humanity amongst men in general, and happiness over the whole world.

What, then, did the Redeemer demand, when He required, that I should love my neighbour *as myself*? He demanded, that I should do towards

every one of my fellow-creatures that which if I were in his situation, I should wish, with proper self-love, that he should do towards me. If you, robbed and covered with blood, were lying in the way, and a stranger passed by on the other side, what would you, for your own sake, wish that he should do towards you? *That* it is, which you must do to him, if you find him in the same calamitous condition. If, at any time, you see an unhappy person, whether he be in necessity or persecuted; deserted, mistaken, or calumniated—put yourself in his situation, and then imagine what you would wish that he should do for you in such a state. You would naturally wish, that he should sufficiently inform himself of your deplorable circumstances—and then point out the means and ways by which you might extricate yourself from the pressure of poverty; or that he should give you his protection against your implacable enemy; or that he should be your friend, your comforter, your counsellor; or that he should do justice to your merits against the malicious attacks of envy, and defend your honour when slandered in your absence. Go, then, saith Christ, *so love your neighbour as you love yourself—Go home and do even so towards another. ‘All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’* (MATT. vii. 12.)

This is the explanation of that love of our neighbour, which is so ambiguous to many persons—in the words of Jesus Christ himself.

It is, therefore, by no means merely a certain toleration towards other men, which is principally understood; or a superficial benevolence which induces us readily to wish all good to others, but to regard them with a shrug of compassion when they are in need. This is no love—this is no feeling of the human heart—but a dead indifference. With such love may the cold stone be animated.

And yet, if we be justified in judging of the inward man by his outward acts, there is with many no better comprehension of the virtue which Christ here recommends to His disciples. With what indifference does one see another's need? Perhaps if a wounded traveller lay on the road, he would find pity; but if the external circumstances do not strongly influence the feelings, where is then the sympathy? How many know of an afflicted family, but let it remain as it is, without inquiring more particularly of its situation, and how it can be improved! How many an one is indifferent when levity or malice judges harshly of the absent—he does not put himself in the place of the calumniated! Yet, if he were so traduced behind his back, he would be much pleased if others interested themselves in his defence. No! this indifference

is not Christianity ; and that is not love where one only tolerates another, or does him no injury.

Just as little does Jesus Christ mean intimate confidence and affection, when He speaks of the love which we should have for our neighbour. We do not love ourselves so much as to wish that all men should bestow upon us their tender friendship and full confidence, since no one is inclined to make so foolish a demand upon the world—consequently we are not bound to that extent by the word *love*, which Christ uses with regard to our neighbour. As little as we, in the character of discreet persons, can ever reasonably desire that another should ruin his own property, his honour, or his health, for our advantage,—even so little are we also obliged by the doctrine of Jesus, to do the same. For, as rational beings, we perceive that every one is born for himself, and not merely as an useful instrument of others—that each one has to perform duties towards himself and those who are most nearly connected with him, and not only towards the stranger. Thus, what I cannot wish that others should render to me, that I also am not bound to render to them, if I see them in similar circumstances.

Love thy neighbour as thyself ! More than this Jesus does not require ; and it is sufficient to lay the foundation for the kingdom of universal happi-

ness—to draw down, as it were, heaven upon earth. He requires that we should love our enemies : yet He by no means implies in this command, that we should disclose the secrets of our hearts to him, as if he was a tried and zealous friend, or trust him who would bring perdition on us—but that we should so treat our enemy as we should wish that he might treat us, were we in his, and he in our situation. If we fall into distress, and he contrive that help shall reach us privately, and even against our will, through a third or fourth hand, it might make us ashamed, but yet we should applaud his act. Go hence, disciple of Jesus ! make your enemy to blush, and to rejoice in a similar manner. If we were slandered, if wicked men spread injurious reports of us ; and an adversary, without our bidding, without our consent, without therefore expecting any reciprocal kindness from us, manfully and honestly protected us, we should be astonished ; he would irresistibly win our respect. Go then hence, disciple of Jesus ! and fill the breast of your enemy with astonishment and respect, by similar means. Everywhere let him have justice ; do for him whatever would affect and please you, if he did it for you, under similar circumstances ; that is to say, “ *Love thy neighbour as thyself.*”

There have been Christians, and Christian sects, who carried this love of enemies farther than is

consistent with the obligations which are due to ourselves, or the rights of others. To such an extreme have they pushed the principle, as even to think every dispute for truth or right or property, absolutely sinful; every cause before the civil judge, prohibited; and even fighting in defence of our native land, highly criminal.

If, however, error can be called praiseworthy, this would assuredly deserve the name; if all men conducted themselves on the same principles, and were actuated by the same feelings, mankind had then recovered their lost country—their peaceful Eden. But it is not so. Dissension arises sometimes from dissimilarity of knowledge, and of the view which we take of one and the same thing:—sometimes from the fury of wild passions, which tyrannize over rude, uncultivated men. Through these channels is introduced an unavoidable necessity, that the cause of dispute should be laid before experienced and impartial persons for their opinion, that their judicial sentence may decide it; hence it also becomes necessary that recourse should be had to constituted authorities, who have power enough to protect our rights and property against the wicked rapacity of the avaricious. Hence it becomes necessary, where no judicature can decide, as is the case with nations, which are independent of each other, under different laws

and forms of government, that each should protect its rights against the attacks of political ambition, by the most forcible means in its power. For, where no rights are valid, there no virtue, no life, is of any value.

Thus the Soldier goes to battle. He sees his enemy opposed to him, and fights with bravery for the freedom, rights, and possessions of his country. He fulfils a sacred duty. He seeks to render his enemy less dangerous in future to his peace and safety ; to paralyze his power of doing mischief, by debilitating and destroying his means of strength, and to keep him in subjection by the agency of fear. But in the midst of the battle the Christian warrior still feels the obligations of Christian love, and is ready to extend mercy to the disarmed, pity to the conquered, and kindness to the prisoner. He performs, to the best of his ability, all that he, were he in the situation of the unfortunate, could rationally desire in his own favour from a conqueror.

Thus sits the Judge upon the bench, not without Christian love towards the malefactor. He still respects in the criminal the man whose crimes he hates. His duty it is to examine into guilt, to secure the peaceful citizen against the malicious and disorderly, and by the punishment of one transgression, to deter others from the commission of similar crimes : but his true charity will not allow

him to go further. He plagues not those who deserve punishment with useless torments—with sufferings which can produce nothing to the safety of the land; he treats them not with fruitless cruelty, but rather as he himself, were he in the place of the malefactor, would wish to be treated—considering his offence, and what is due to public order and security.

It is, then, clear to me, not only who is properly my neighbour, but also what that love is which Jesus demands for him from my heart. I know that more is not required than a man's heart is capable of giving: this demand, this requisition, is perfectly consistent with my rights and duties towards myself. And why should I renounce this virtue? It is not hard: it renders us really human; and makes the great race of mortals one single family, of which Thou, O Supreme Good! art the Father and the Head.

With that holy, world-blessing love hast Thou, O my Saviour, my Divine Model, loved all men as Thy brethren! How could I persecute those who are dear to Thee? Did not Thy tears once flow for them as well as for myself? Didst Thou not bear the crown of thorns—the prelude of Thine ignominious, propitiating death, for their sake as well as for mine? Didst Thou not at Golgotha suffer and bleed for the salvation of their souls

as well as mine? Didst Thou not supplicate for mercy on Thine enemies as well as on Thy friends? Is it not Thy word which speaks so forcibly to our hearts: "*He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*"

Yes; all my fellow-creatures are worthy of my regard, and of being as dear to me as I am to myself—as my own interest is worthy of my care. Far be it from me maliciously to impede another's happiness; rather will I, to the utmost of my weak ability, promote the happiness of all around me. Far from regarding the stranger and his sufferings with cold indifference, I will say to myself: 'He is a man as well as I, a child of God—my brother; I will try to give him a proof of sincere, of Christian love.'

It shall be so. Providence brings me into different relations with mankind—and from this time I will behave towards all with whom I may be, in any way, connected, in a sincere and upright manner. I will show respect to my superiors even as I should wish to receive it from my inferiors—for the sake of public order. I will suppose myself in the place of my inferiors, and so treat them as I should desire to be treated. I will mete to others with the measure with which I would be meted to by them. I will love others as myself;

and on the happiness of my neighbour found my own.

O God, the Holy Ghost ! may this sublime thought never be obliterated from my mind. May it be continually present to me—that all my sentiments and all my deeds may be conformed to this sacred and influential principle of brotherly love, or Christian charity. O Heavenly Father ! give me grace and power to walk according to the precept of Thy well-beloved Son. Amen.

XVII.

DETRACTION.

JEREMIAH ix. 23, 24.

" Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

WHEN we hear one person in company speaking of another, we should fancy that each were himself the most happy, the most wise, the most skilful, the most perfect in every respect. Nobody, indeed, ventures to praise himself and his own qualifications, because self-praise is considered unbecoming; but, on the other hand, we observe from certain obscure expressions, from certain depreciating remarks which are occasionally dropped concerning the understanding, the circumstances, or the condition of this or that individual, that each would willingly insinuate of himself: ' My judgment is far

greater, my fortune more secure, my situation more advantageous.'

But even those who regard others as in every particular inferior to themselves; and believe that they understand, do, and have every thing much better than others, are often found, when we know them more intimately, to be the most discontented with themselves. Their words, therefore, do not accord with their inward convictions; and they are like actors, who often represent characters of a higher station than they fill.

This endeavour to under-rate others by comparison with ourselves, while yet we cannot be contented with our own condition, is a peculiar and remarkable trait in the human mind. For, if we know that we are not so learned as others, why should we not praise them? Or if we conjecture that others are in better circumstances than we, why should we under-rate them? The true reason is, that we are in general much more inclined to blame and object, than to praise.

We are not to suppose that the readiness of men to depreciate their fellow-creatures always springs from actual hatred and ill-will. We know persons, indeed, who can have no cause for mutual dislike, or who are scarcely acquainted with each other, or who would wish to be considered as good friends, that yet cannot resist the desire of limiting, by

some opportune remark, the praise which we might bestow on such or such a neighbour.

As little are we to think that envy of the perfections of others, is always the cause which excites the love of detraction. It is not unusual for people, who have no reason whatever to envy others, eagerly to censure them, and to calumniate what is praiseworthy in their conduct.

A fondness for detraction often arises from mere haughtiness and capricious temper, unconnected with any particular bad intention. Sometimes it proceeds from ennui, or a desire to entertain ourselves and our companions, even at the expence of charity. At other times it is produced by bare complaisance towards those who are present, and to whom we wish either to make ourselves seem of consequence, or to say something that may be thought polite. At least I would not hastily decide that every one who attempts to detract from the reputation of another, does it out of malicious intent, or for the sake of calumniating. Nay ; I very often find the failing of detraction amongst persons, who, on account of their piety and humanity, appear to me very estimable in other respects.

If I search for the sources of this but too common fault—a fault by which many a noble mind is tarnished ; it seems to me, that they lie in the natural aspiration of man towards a more perfect

state. But this intrinsically noble impulse often takes a false direction, and leads to strange self-deception of the soul. Without, perhaps, remarking it, we are easily misled to confound the good opinion we entertain of our own qualifications, with the real talents which we would willingly possess ; so that instead of striving after inward perfection itself, we are more desirous of exciting in others the belief that we already possess it. And if we cannot, in our conscience, greatly esteem what we are, or what we have, there appears to us to be some indemnification in the esteem which others may manifest towards us. But because we feel that we have not always the ability to raise ourselves to that degree of perfection to which we wish to attain, and at the same time would not lose the good opinion of others, we become inclined to lessen, if possible, the favourable judgment of the world towards those who are more perfect than ourselves. If we cannot elevate ourselves, we may yet depress others ; and thus, at least in the eyes of the credulous, stand on an equal footing with them. Many derive a pleasurable sensation from finding some defect in the talents or happiness of others, because they feel themselves on comparison—though it may be only the self-deceit of their imagination—more contented with their own condition. One man tries to lower the general opinion of the abundance

and prosperity in which his neighbour lives, by all kind of scruples—only in order that he may say to himself and others : ‘ My condition, indeed, is not so splendid, but it is therefore more secure.’ He obscures the honour which attaches to the transactions of a second, by raising doubts of the purity of his intentions—in order to give himself and others to understand : ‘ I should have done as much in his circumstances ; or should have done no less in mine, if I had been as vain and ambitious as he.’ A man lessens the high estimate, formed by the public, of the intellect, discernment, and abilities of a third, by immediately bringing to light particular failings which would have been discovered only by their consequences—in order to convince himself and others, that he who knows so well how to judge of the failings of his acquaintances, cannot possibly be inferior to them in discrimination.

But whilst, for the sake of self-gratification, we thus voluntarily deceive ourselves, we are, unconsciously perhaps, guilty of the grossest treachery against our own character and happiness. For, by these undervaluing judgments which we pass and circulate with regard to our neighbour, we lead every one who has any knowledge of mankind to the just suspicion, that we must be very weak on those points, in which we exhibit the weaknesses of others. Yes ; by our censures and doubts we

betray the fact—that we secretly acknowledge the good qualities of him whom we blame ; that it is difficult for us to attain to them ourselves ; that we are desirous of standing on an equality with him ; that because we cannot raise ourselves to him, we would willingly drag him down to us. For it is certain—and every body knows it from his own experience—that if a man be really content with his condition, he gives himself no trouble to lower the good opinion entertained of others. The healthy man has no cause to raise a doubt of another's health—whilst the sickly one, on the other hand, as if it were a consolation to him, is ready to suspect sickness, or propensity to it, in those about him ; and takes vast pains to discover it. A rich prince does not trouble himself to depreciate the fortune of one of his subjects, for he sees no advantage to himself in doing so ; but he may, perhaps, unwillingly become the panegyrist of the riches of rival princes.

Thus is the detraction, which prevails far too generally in society, even when it does not proceed from bad intention—very bad policy. For instead of exposing the weak points of others, we only expose our own to the sharp-sightedness of the experienced observer. And we must not suppose that people will be as much inclined to give credit to our detracting judgments, as they will be desirous to learn why we would make the good qua-

lities of another appear so insignificant. Only examine yourself, and be assured, that as you commonly think of the judgments of others, so do others think of those which you deliver. Would you learn the secret failings of this or that one of your fellow-creatures—go and hear what kind of frailties he is most fond of remarking in others. A lame man first observes, and long follows with his eyes, one who limps, if he walk among a thousand.

Detraction, however, is not only imprudence or bad policy ; it leads on imperceptibly to far more important evils than the mere betraying of our weaknesses. It is the first step to boasting—nay, it is itself already an indirect boasting, an extolling of our good qualities before others, whether we really have them, or only appear to have them. He who is not willing to do justice to what is praiseworthy in others, if the subject of applause cannot be absolutely denied, yet calls it in question by a suspicious look, and takes away with one hand the meed of approbation which he gives with the other—he says : ‘ There is nothing wonderful in this man, who is so much extolled. Any one in his situation might perform more, and be more than he. For example, I possess good qualities which he has not shown. I am not less praiseworthy than the present object of your admiration.’

Let the Detractor, when his failing first begins

to appear, be ever so ingenious in dissembling, soon will his mien, his look declare, what his lips discreetly refuse to utter. They will become boastful as soon as he finds that credit is denied him. He will explain himself more clearly, as soon as that man rises in esteem whom he had endeavoured to lower. And if it happen that he is unfortunately the rival of the person praised, then the vexation which he felt with regard to his good qualities, turns into envy—the desire of detracting, into calumny, that is, into an attempt to magnify the defects and weaknesses of his opponent, or to fabricate vices in him.

There are few crimes which are so generally received with disgust by mankind as calumny and envy. They lead to the most abject baseness, and excite deep aversion both in noble and ignoble minds, whenever their traces are to be recognized. And to these crimes detraction tends at last. He who allows himself, in society, to detract from the worth of others, or from a favourable opinion of them, has laid the foundation for becoming a calumniator, even when he cannot perceive in himself the smallest inclination to it, and even if he should be naturally kind, good-tempered, and tolerant. The circumstances of men often alter; and they often become, under different influence, very different characters. Boast not that till now

you have remained free from these sad vices ; but ask yourself whether you were always entirely free from the desire to depreciate the praiseworthy qualities of others. And if you are conscious of having been sometimes guilty of this failing, then consider if you have not been already tempted, though it were transiently, to indulge in envy of some person or other, or to feel a pleasure in magnifying his weaknesses and failings.

More ridiculous, but sometimes not less dreadful in the consequences, than malicious calumny, is a vice of another kind which is usually associated with ostentation, or a love of boasting. This is Pride—the extravagant opinion which a person entertains of his own good qualities ;—an opinion which he exhibits less in words, than in gestures and actions.

Pride is as diversified as the mode of thinking among mankind ; and has as many gradations as any other vice. But in the hankering after detraction, lies the germ of exaggerated self-esteem. Education and circumstances do the rest—they determine partly what degree of altitude the pride shall reach—and partly what kind of pride shall most prevail.

Hence we see, for example, amongst young people who are yet flourishing in the spring-time of their strength, that the pride of external beauty is most common. They will seldom cordially do

justice to the graces of others of their own sex ; and they would prefer discovering what is defective and feasting their eyes upon it, to admiring what has been made the subject of praise in others. Here is the desire of detraction—even when the thoughts do not find utterance—here we see unfold itself, however innocent it may be at first, the inclination to vanity. We endeavour to supply by art what nature has not given, and to increase or render conspicuous the peculiar beauties of the person by becoming ornaments.

But the time of youth is fleeting—the fire of the eye is soon quenched amid the tears and cares of later days :—other passions gain possession of the mind ; and he who can no longer please by outward beauty, wishes to shine by his intellectual acquirements, his rank in society, or the extent of his possessions. The fault remains the same, only it takes a different hue. The youthful desire of pleasing, and the little vanity, which in more advanced years would run the risk of being laughed at, change into obstinate self-conceit, pride of rank, and love of wealth. As every virtue assimilates us more to God, so every vice brings us nearer to the world. As the brute raises not his sight to heaven, but fixes it on the earth beneath him ;—so is it with Pride. The proud man looks not on him who is higher than himself, but considers those only who

are inferior, or appear not to possess what he imagines himself to be endowed with. What is the rich peasant in comparison with the rich citizen—or this latter with the rich prince? What is the citizen of pretended good family—who indulges himself, on this account, in haughtiness towards those around him—to the nobleman, who, proud of his nobility, looks down contemptuously upon the citizen;—and what is the nobleman to the potentate, who bears the crown and sceptre?

We commonly call Pride a folly—and it is so: for who can be more ridiculous than the man that thinks highly of himself, on account of things which do not belong to him,—which at the hour of death fall from him like dust,—of which, even in the next hour he may, perhaps, be deprived,—and in which he is excelled by thousands of his contemporaries? But pride is more than folly—it is a vice poisoning both body and soul, and is as dangerous as any other poison. It manifests itself, indeed, not in actions, but in the imagination which a man forms of his own excellences. The more extravagant these imaginations are, the more extravagant is the Pride of the man.

Now—that extravagant idea of the value or insignificance of things is a kind of madness; especially if this idea become a settled frame of mind, after which we are to model our actions. A man

who is impressed with it, must always mete with a false measure, and form a perverted judgment, whenever his pride is touched. He then acts like a drunkard, who sees things differently from what they really are.

As, therefore, the vice of Pride especially seizes on the imagination of man, we must not wonder if this become at length more or less disorganized by it. Thus proud men are commonly most liable to become insane ; and it is observed in mad-houses that the greatest number of insane persons are puffed up with excessive pride in the midst of their deplorable misery.

But let us turn our sight from these dreadful aberrations of man ! And yet to these at last may we be brought by the pleasure which we find in detraction, and in undervaluing the good qualities of others !

Instead of detracting from the superior properties of his brethren, the Christian willingly acknowledges them ; and rejoices in them, if they be truly excellent. Freely does he concede to others greater knowledge, greater abilities, and greater discernment ;—for God has so willed, that His gifts shall be unèqually distributed—in order that one may become so much the more useful and indispensable than another. I am not on that account of less value to myself, or in the sight of God.

Willingly will I suffer this or that man's superior external appearance to have its full estimation—it is the work of God. I will rejoice in it without the smallest mixture of envy. For how quickly does the rose fade! How soon does the dark hair become white as snow—the blooming cheek turn pale—the flexible and graceful shape bend down with the infirmities of age!

Willingly will I concede the advantage to him who has greater means and property than myself,—without detracting from it by a *but* or an *if*. May he enjoy it! for I too have my enjoyments in life, though with more moderate possessions. It is not external good—but the good which dwells in the heart, that makes us happy. Why should I envy him that which does not belong to him? It is a borrowed good—in death not even the vesture which covers him remains his own.

Willingly will I acknowledge the merit of him who undertakes any thing generally useful to the world or his fellow-citizens. Why should I suspect his views in so doing, as I know not the “recesses of his heart,” and the relation in which it stands to God? Why should I detract from his esteem amongst mankind? Although, perhaps, not I myself, yet my children or my grand-children may participate in the benefit of his exertions.

Willingly will I permit him who thinks himself

of nobler birth than myself, to enjoy undisturbed the small pleasure he can derive from boasting supposed advantage, in the acquirement of which he had not the smallest share. For what more born nobly or ignobly in the sight of God? In civil society various ranks and stations subsist is necessary to the good order of the world, which would cease without them. Why should any man by detraction, endeavour to destroy that, which has been benevolently and wisely appointed?

There is only one thing here below, which I call estimable in myself,—and only one, which commands esteem from all men. This is VIRTUE—*is the knowledge of God*—the walking humbly before Him. Therefore, the Holy Scripture saith: ‘*saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord: I exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*’ (JEREM. ix. 23, 24.)

And may Thy approbation, all-wise, all-merciful Lord, be the goal of my thoughts and actions. I can but appear before Thee without reproach with serenity, O Thou all-proving, all-seeing—then may I well submit, whether, in the eye

mortals, I be more or less worthy on account of knowledge, beauty, riches, rank, or dignity. For I breathe, I live for Thee alone, O my Creator—for the supreme felicity of Thy kingdom.

This spirit will I preserve :—it is the spirit of Jesus ! I will watch over myself more carefully, and beware lest I fall into the vice of depreciating, by my uncharitable judgment, the good which I remark in my fellow-creatures. That which deserves esteem, I will willingly commend ;—for by such means I may excite in others a noble emulation. Then may I, by a word, be the cause of good in many a heart, even without my knowing it—and may further Thy kingdom, O God, which is the kingdom of love and bliss. Amen.

XVIII.

THE ILL-TEMPERED MAN.

COLOSSIANS iii. 12.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.”

WE cannot but wonder at the trouble which men often give themselves to enjoy their lives as little as possible ; at their making it, as it would seem, their first duty to render disagreeable to others, and still more so to themselves, the few days which the will of their Creator has assigned them upon earth.

There are various kinds of persons, who, happen what will, are never contented with any thing ; and cannot agree with any body, however kind and conceding he may be towards them. They have always some subject for censure, for quarrel, for reproach, or for complaint. They are always engaging in new friendships, and can preserve none for long. No where are they pleased. In every place they find something to offend them, always

something to object to—at one time the regulations, at another the persons, of the family with which they are connected. No one does any thing to their satisfaction.

Such miserable and quarrelsome people may, exclusively of these bad habits, have very amiable qualities ; they may, at first sight, be very prepossessing, and continue pleasing as long as we are not more intimately acquainted with them, and perceive not their failings. They may even accustom themselves to conceal their morose and imperious temper in strange places and new society. They are courteous, indulgent, full of attention towards others. They wish to please. They take pains to gain approbation :—partly because they imagine that the new acquaintances are according to their taste, men after their own hearts ;—partly to show others, with whom they live in discord, that they are by no means unsocial and unfriendly by nature, but that they have been compelled to be so by the faults of their earlier associates. But as soon as the new acquaintances shall have become a few weeks older, and have lost the charm of novelty ; as soon as a nearer connexion permits a greater intimacy,—the quarrelsome man turns the rough side outwards, and is again, as before, without forbearance. He blames, reproaches, is positive, would have every thing according to his fancy,

and finishes by tearing asunder the bonds of the friendship he had so industriously sought, and by contemptuously rejecting the esteem which we had conceived for him.

This singular disposition, which eclipses, and sometimes renders entirely useless, all the laudable qualities of a person, all his excellent talents and knowledge, however splendid they may be,—is frequently nothing more than the fruit of a consciousness of such advantages, only the effect of the pride of possessing these acquirements. With a small portion of modesty the quarrelsome man would be converted into the most peaceable of all men. But this consciousness of superiority leads him to look down upon others, and to hold them cheap in his opinion. He thinks that he has a more correct insight into every thing ; that he knows every thing better : all opposition offends and provokes him ;—it appears to him like doubting the soundness of his understanding, a mistrust of his knowledge and experience. He rejects with a decisive tone whatever is not according to his taste. He passes a severe judgment upon both the important and the unimportant ; and will maintain his opinions even at the risk of grieving others. In his passion, it is alike to him whether a person hate him or not ; he means to stand above the world, to be all-sufficient for himself, and independent.

If he be offended, he resents it haughtily ; if he be hated, or even misunderstood with regard to his good qualities, he consoles himself with his consciousness of superiority. He is accustomed to find fault. With him all those who do not submit implicitly to his decisions, are unworthy of regard.

The foundation of this dangerous way of thinking is commonly laid in the first rudiments of education—when parents pet a child, flatter him on account of his natural gifts, and leave him as much as possible to his own will. This blind parental love makes the child domineering, too full of confidence in his own accomplishments, and selfish in the direction of his mind. He will sacrifice every thing to carry his point, even the greatest pleasures ; he will forego every thing, even if it cost him tears, except the triumph of having effected his purpose. This self-conceit, and the habits arising from it, of pretending to know every thing better than others, of disputation and obstinacy, may, however, be equally the consequence of opposite practices in the mode of education. If you treat a child severely and unjustly—being persuaded of the injustice and short-sightedness of his preceptors—he will suffer in silence ; but he will continue in his own opinion ;—he will accustom himself to feel distrust in the understanding and hearts of others,—to consider his own convictions as the only right ones,—and, at a

riper and more independent age, to maintain them with the same harshness which was exercised towards himself. People, too, who in their youth have lived neglected, in poverty or oppression, but have raised themselves by their own powers to a certain respectability, may easily be led—whilst they are going too far in reliance on their own power and worth—into a stubborn pride and a quarrelsome disposition.

A perverted view of the world is ever connected with this fault ;—not only when a man imagines that on account of his other excellencies, he will be excused in society for some occasional neglect, ill-humour, severity of expression, and rough conduct ;—but when he thinks that all men must adopt his principles as the only proper standard, and view the affairs of life in the same light with him ; and that they are misled like ignorant fools, contemptible beings, limited in their understandings and corrupted in their hearts, whenever they differ from him in their sentiments or actions.

The foundation of a quarrelsome disposition may, however, very frequently lie in a disordered state of the body. An irritable, hasty temperament, or disturbed bile, easily brings us to a gloomy view of life, to discontent with every thing around us, to disgust at the slightest contradiction, to vexation at trifles, to a disposition to anger, to severity of

judgment. In such a case, there is nothing right : every thing is faulty, burdensome, and offensive.

The discontented man is not at rest till he has found an object, which he may look upon as the cause of his irritability ; and may abuse for being so. Only when, in entirely novel circumstances, he in a certain measure forgets himself, and when the spirit, actively excited by them, obtains a mastery over the influence of bodily infirmities, does he appear more cheerful, more amiable—and no longer like himself.

The evil of quarrelsomeness is, however, more easy of cure when its origin is found in the condition of the body, than when it is seated in a false turn and habit of mind. The tendency occasioned by a sickly body, to be offended by trifles, can and will for the most part be removed by diversion, exercise, change of air,—and even by the difference of age,—or at any rate by the wonderful power of the soul over the body. For if we be once convinced, that our propensity to feel disgust, to impute blame, to indulge in anger and quarrelling, is only the working of our infirmities, then is the soul capable, if not of commanding a serene, cheerful and contented disposition—yet of preventing all unamiable expressions of a cross, uncharitable temper. The noble pride of the soul dictates to it, 'Wilt thou be the slave or master of thine own frail

and peevish body ? Its own feeling warns us to be especially cautious, in trials and misfortunes, not to give too much room and credence to its angry humour.

It is ever far more difficult to heal an ailing spirit than a sickly body. The former exercises, when it wills to do so, a certain authority over the latter. It is proper that it should have such authority. But the sick and faulty spirit, which ought to cure itself, is often so perverse as not to acknowledge the existence of its sickness—and still less will it attempt a cure. Thus from one evil others gradually arise. Each defect of mind is a widely spreading cancer.

He who has once made it his habit to be the dogmatist in every thing ; to reject every thing which is not according to his ideas ; to take amiss every contradiction which he meets with ; to quarrel about trifles with his friends and acquaintances ; to utter aloud his discontent at regulations which are contrary to his opinions, or at principles and actions which deviate from his own—he will not stop short at this. The less the world listens to him, the more bitter and malicious will he be, at length, in his judgment of the world. Misanthropy and contemptuousness lay, too frequently, fast hold upon him.

The more he thinks that he himself and his views are not appreciated, the more suspicious and

distrustful does he become. The more frequent opportunity he has of remarking that others are more beloved than he, that others are preferred and favoured, while perhaps they have less merit than himself—so much the more keenly will he feel the torment of envy and ill-will; so much the more readily will he pardon himself for vilifying and calumniating the more happy person. One sin holds out the hand to another; and he becomes in turn the prey and the sacrifice of all. “*For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one,*” (JOB v. 2.) said Eliphaz, the Temanite, to Job, when he complained, in his impatience, of all that surrounded him. The same words are applicable to the quarrelsome wrangler, to whom nothing is right, and who gives his discontented humour full scope to make him hate all, and be hated by all. At variance with all, always in vexation, often, through his imprudence, in embarrassments of a painful nature, constantly in error as to being mistaken, or not valued according to his merits—he consumes himself with mortification, care and grief—weakens his health by anger and secret rage—and, without willing his own destruction like a suicide, prepares for himself a premature grave, or an infirm, tormented and miserable old age:—his absurd vehemence destroys him. It is improbable that he should have friends because he is without

toleration and forbearance. The foolish man ! he knows not how to love his neighbour, and yet is in want of that love which would be gentle, tender, forbearing, and full of indulgence towards himself. He who, in his absurd insolence, mistakes himself, mistakes his acquaintance, and even those who most sincerely wish him well—fancies himself mistaken by every man, and secretly repines at it. He who will accommodate himself to no one, yet desires that every one else should yield to him. He who, with the same concession and mildness which please him so much in others, might live a life of happiness and enjoyment, destroys his own peace ; incessantly injures himself, like a madman, by his folly and egotism ; and then childishly mourns over the malice of mankind, their stupidity, narrow-mindedness, and corruption. For the most trifling reasons he breaks with his best friends, thrusts from him his dependents with sneers or reproaches ; treats his superiors with haughty dryness, or with the mortifying and dictatorial tone of superior knowledge—and thus he himself bears witness by his quarrelsome disposition, that, notwithstanding all his other estimable qualities, he is totally unfit for any situation which requires a correct and dispassionate demeanour, and a spirit of accommodation to the world—in which one is not to quarrel, but to do good. He must ascribe it to himself, if

we set him aside, and prefer others, even with less ability in other respects ; if we set him aside, not because we indulge in revenge towards him on account of his offensive manners, but because he renders himself useless by his ways of thinking and acting. Activity, prudent forbearance, a conciliating behaviour towards our colleagues in office, our neighbours, and such people as we may live with, richly compensate for the absence of many other qualifications : for in society and public life, by far the greater part depend not so much upon their understanding, as upon their practical skill. Thus the ill-tempered man spoils the good which Providence has afforded him, or his own diligence produced, by his bad humours and evil habits. He, perhaps, understands every thing, but the way of being useful and efficient. He excludes himself from society ; remains unprofitable, with all his capabilities, and much as he prides himself upon them, he must still painfully perceive that people can do very well without him.

But the ill-tempered man is most to be pitied in his domestic life. Where, under the shelter of *home*, the wise man, the true Christian, finds his peaceful paradise and his sweet resting-place amidst the storms of life, he has prepared his place of torment. For his tone towards others becomes the tone of others towards him. As he blames every

thing in others, so, on the other hand, every thing in him appears to us perverse and wrong. As he makes much ado about every little oversight, so he is repaid with the same captious rigour. Thus he never attains serenity and permanent repose, because he permits not others to enjoy any pleasure untroubled by his restless habits.

Many an one may have recognized himself in this melancholy picture, and long ago perceived that various discomforts of his life were the consequences of an ill-tempered, angry, suspicious, secretly proud and domineering disposition. It may be that he was often right in his opinion and judgment ; but he was wrong in the actions which proceeded from them. Perhaps he was not destitute of knowledge, but he wanted prudence to conduct himself in the best and most appropriate manner. He wanted, doubtless, the foundation of every good quality ; that quiet, firm, religious way of thinking with regard to God and man, of which He alone, who did the most and the most lasting good, even Jesus Christ, was a pure and perfect model. He wanted that deep, religious sense which the Scripture thus inculcates on every one who is initiated into the faith of Christ : “ *Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one an-*

other, if any man have a quarrel against any ; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." (COL. iii. 12—14.)

We must examine ourselves, to discover where the evil originates. If our sombre, intolerant disposition be only the effect of sickness, then should the care of our impaired health be our first concern. For this irritability, this tendency to vexation and anger, this propensity to look at every thing on the worst side ; this restless pleasure which we find in giving vent to our secret ill humour, by using hard words and quarrelling, may be the forerunner of a sickness fatal to life itself. It is our duty to ascertain whether there be any physical cause for this unnatural irritability. We often refuse to do so, because we think not that we are sick, but that the persons about us are in fault. But this is only a higher degree of the sickness itself, in which the malady is not felt, although it has become visible by many external signs. We have often seen such a perverse disposition as this in a person who was about to suffer a severe illness. Thus also after a dangerous sickness has been overcome, the former serenity and cheerfulness of mind are frequently restored, and the convalescent person, before ill-tempered and cross, is now friendly and well-disposed to all, and appears to have be-

come an entirely new man. But have you had reason to suspect from many years experience, and from hints of the friends and acquaintance of your early youth, that a certain discontentedness, vehemence, or quarrelsome, unforgiving temper is inherent in your mind and way of thinking ; have you long ago felt that it is an inward pride which makes you assuming towards others, and discontented when they contradict your wishes, projects, and opinions ? Unhappy man ! you are more to be pitied than if you were labouring under bodily pain. For to eradicate this failing, to its deepest root, will cost you a hard struggle. Your bad habit will always be liable to break out again, even when you think that you have overcome it. But, my friend, does the true pride of a noble spirit dwell within you—that of being conscious you can do any thing with yourself which you may wish ?—then is the victory not impossible—then may you yet have hope of tranquillity, of seeing yourself beloved by all your acquaintances, and of having your general worth appreciated. You will yet be happy. Only add to your other virtues that sincere friendliness, that heartfelt humility, affability, and patience with the faults of others, of which the Scripture speaks ; especially the all-enduring charity, which desires to make every one happy and contented, and which is *the bond of perfectness*.

Learn, before all things, to be silent, when your usual ill temper would instigate you to speak ; learn first to endure and to forgive, when others show their weaknesses—to accommodate yourself kindly to their wishes, when you can do it without great disadvantage to yourself and others. Think often, that by anger and reproof and appearance of ill will we improve nothing, but commonly make matters worse ; that every thing is to be accomplished by goodness and charity, but nothing by harshness and defiance. Remember on every occasion when the judgement and principles of others differ from your own, that you may be entirely right in your conduct, your knowledge, or your experience ; at the same time that others in totally different situations, with different views, knowledge, or experience, may be equally certain of the truth and correctness of their persuasions ; that a single mortal like yourself cannot know every thing perfectly ; and that even if you alone did so, it would be folly to try to oblige every one to adopt your inclinations, views, and taste. God Himself is the author of the endless variety among human spirits. You cannot make all to think, will, and act precisely like yourself ; you cannot mould all men after your own model—you are not God ! Bear with others as they are to bear with

you ; and think not they must put up with that in you, which you do not tolerate in them.

If you hate, you will be hated—if you despise other people, they will despise you ; if you are haughty to them, they will be haughty to you. Put off your vices—love others, and every one will love you : make every one who comes in contact with you happy for the moment, if it be only by a friendly word—and every one will seek occasion to assist in making you happy.

And may this also be my endeavour, O Holy God ! Thou who givest power, and blessing, and success to all that is good—grant me also the strength of Thy grace, that I may subdue myself ; and, through love of Thee and of Thy creatures, acquire that bond of perfectness, which is most precious in Thy sight.

DISCRETION IN SPEECH.

COLOSSIANS iv. 6.

"Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

WORDS are deeds! of my words, as well as of my conduct, must I render an account to Him who judgeth the heart. How careless have I hitherto been with regard to what I said;—how thoughtless in the ordering of my speech towards my friends, no less than towards my enemies? Has my tongue been able, on some occasions, by a judicious word to bring together again separated friends; to soothe the suffering with consolation; to warn the erring; to deter the villain from his audacious course?—how many other things which might have contributed to the peace or salvation of a neighbour, has it omitted! How often has it been dumb, when a single word would have given pleasure to some one, without any detriment to myself! How often has it spoken—when to have

been silent would have best ensured my own tranquillity and the harmony of others !

Words are deeds ! By words we execute the weightiest matters in the world—we effect the most good, or the greatest evil. Neither riches, nor birth, nor civil consequence—but *speech* is the principal power by which man works out his will. Not the sword, but the word, is the sharpest weapon, with which we can either attack or defend. This power—this weapon—is granted to every mortal by his Creator. Hence each is obliged to render an account of the right use of the gift to the donor of it.

Our words are the balsam which we pour out as a lenitive to the pain of an aching heart—they are also the poison by which we destroy the happiness of a whole family. Through a word, we raise the humble, and abase the proud. It is the tongue which creates and exasperates enemies, or procures new friends and confirms old ones. Speech is the great comprehensive bond by which human society is held together, and people are linked with people. By words we give our commands—by words sorrow is appeased, anxieties are soothed, the erring are set right, domestic concerns are regulated, joys are expressed, reverence is manifested, devotion is winged to Heaven :—but through words likewise passion is armed, hypocrisy becomes dangerous,

innocence is seduced, honesty is put in fear, malice is instigated, truth is set at nought—hell is established upon earth.

If to the wise man—to the Christian—not even the most apparently trifling act of his life must be indifferent ; if he must reflect with himself, in regard even to the smallest matter : ‘ Is this becoming of me ? ’—how important to him must be that speech, which he daily and hourly exercises !—speech, through which he makes himself known, by which he discloses his mode of thinking, and the worthiness or the meanness of his mind—speech, by which he turns other men to his advantage, and leads them to their happiness or ruin.

If I consider all the good or evil that I can occasion through the communication of my thoughts in speech—in commands, directions, criticism and conversation ; and all that I have, in truth, occasioned ;—if I think over this in its whole extent, I cannot but be terrified at the levity with which I have often given my orders, uttered my wishes, made my opinions known, or pronounced my judgment. I perceive, that I have often, in my words, lost sight of the dignity after which my soul aspires ; I perceive, that I am myself to blame, if I have enjoyed less esteem among my acquaintances, among my fellow-citizens—less respect, even among my own relatives, than I would willingly have en-

joyed. For my tongue was much less frequently the minister of a serene, peaceful, collected mind, than it should have been. It was, too often, rather the organ of my overbearing rage, my inclination for malicious joy, my tendency to vanity and self-flattery, my unlawful desires, my egotism, or my avarice.

How can I answer for this in the presence of that God, before whom nothing is available, but what is right, and good, and holy ?

“ Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (COL. iii. 17.) Do it as if you did it in the stead of Jesus. Do it as Jesus would have done it, if he had been placed and had acted in your situation, in your circumstances, in your relations. Thus are we taught by the word of God.

And is it then so hard to fulfil this important duty—a duty the fulfilment of which is repaid to us with the approbation of God and men—a duty through which we promote our own happiness even upon earth ? Is it so hard to keep a bridle on my tongue—that tongue which so readily obeys the smallest impulse of my mind ?

No, it is not ! For how often have I prevailed over myself in every point—how often have I been perfectly circumspect in my judgment and conversation—when it was necessary to be so, in

order to avoid an evil, or to promote my advantage. Well then—thus should I be at all times—for I can daily avert harm, or obtain pleasure, by a wise employment of my faculty of speech.

Discretion in speech is, hence, one of the most becoming and valuable characteristics of the truly wise man—of the sincere disciple of Jesus. This discretion will, by constant attention to oneself, be acquired without trouble, through diligent use it will at length become a habit,—it will repay us with inward self-satisfaction, and protect us against a thousand different vexations to which levity and inconsiderateness expose us.

Discretion is a perpetual sobriety of the spirit, which does not allow it to be intoxicated, and confounded in its ideas, wishes, and intentions, by any tyrannizing passion, by any excessive feelings, whether of aversion or of desire. It is that divine equanimity which Jesus manifested in the moments of happiness, and in the bitterest sufferings. It is the conformity of our thoughts and propensities with the example of Jesus, with the Law of God, with the Gospel—precepts of righteousness and equity.

There is consequently no discretion in speech to be imagined without the dominion of the spirit over the earthly, animal part of man, over the feelings and propensities which are, as it were, the offspring

of the flesh—which are produced by the constitution of the body, the circulation of the blood, and the irritation of the nerves. One effect of this self-government is caution in speaking. In vain does wrath boil up. The spirit cannot, indeed, repress the flame of indignation, but during the storm of the blood, it retains composure enough not to act. It waits with firmness for a peaceful moment—and not till it is entirely free from the influence of sensibility, does it resolve what must be done. Unholy desires may awake ; but the spirit of the disciple of Jesus does not become a slave to them. He avoids every action, every influence, so long as these desires are raging : he defeats them by diverting his mind from dwelling on them, until he is again in full strength—and not till then does he decide upon his course. The temptation of considerable advantage in civil life, may stagger for a moment the principles of honesty ; but the wise man—the child of God—does not allow himself to be betrayed by this seduction into dishonest conduct. He permits not to his mouth a word—to his hand an act, until he is in the most perfect tranquillity of mind—till he perceives clearly, whether he would deal justly and honourably, if he made himself in any way a partaker in the acquisition of this gain—whether or no the means be praiseworthy by which he should accomplish his aim.

A continual attention to ourselves—a constant practice of *considerateness in acting and speaking*, makes it at last like a second nature to us,—and far easier than we had supposed. And it is this habitual discretion after which we are to aspire—as the children of God, the creatures of the most holy and most perfect Being. Virtue itself must become the habit of our soul, in order that we may attain unto holiness. Virtue exists at all times in our soul, when in its innermost recesses, it contends with and conquers unrighteous propensities and sinful wishes. But when virtue has become mistress,—when it has so become, as it were, another nature, that it would be difficult for us to act otherwise than virtuously—then may we expect to find in ourselves true holiness, that is, perfect purity and unspottedness of soul.

And if you are in earnest in your endeavours to reach this degree of perfection, that you may not remain one among the most insignificant and worthless beings in God's creation—if you are in earnest in your struggle to gain that effectual self-command, and that sublime sobriety of mind in which you may always continue to have a controul over yourself, and your inclinations—*then above all things speak with charity.*

Whoever speaks *with love*, and *out of love*, to his fellow-men, is in the way to the highest perfection.

He will not allow himself to be seduced by any base passions to become the betrayer of the happiness, the peace, the welfare, the security, or the honour of his neighbour. He will quench the flames of rising anger ; he will put to silence impure desires ; he will not speak according to the suggestions of an offended self-love ; he will be high-minded ; he will act nobly, and render his word worthy of respect.

Even as love is the very essence of the Christian religion, so also is it the groundwork of all the judgments, opinions, and words, of true Christians. The mouth which has learnt only to bless, readily renounces the oaths of hell ; the mouth which desires to promote only what is profitable, to assist in diffusing hilarity, to comfort the suffering, to counsel the afflicted, will not open itself to pour out defamation, to utter contempt, to sow divisions, to deceive the honest, or to impose on the ingenuous.

He who speaks *out of love* and *with love*, speaks no evil. Such, only, is the discretion at which we should aim, as wise and sincere professors of Christianity. For this discretion is not to produce in us mere cunning, or cold caution, lest we bring injury on ourselves through inconsiderateness ; but it is to lead us, in our words and conversation, to that which is beneficial, profitable, instructive, and pleasing to others. “ *Let your speech,*” say the Holy Scriptures, “ *be alway with grace, seasoned*

with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." (COL. iv. 6.)

You know a man by his words. They are the garments in which his spirit clothes itself. According to his speech you judge of him ; by his conversation he gains your esteem. Roughness and coarseness of expression indicate a rough spirit within, a neglected intellect, a want of decent education, or an absence of sound principle and fine feelings.

Well, then, as you judge of others by their speech, so will you also be judged by others according to your words. You yourself give to them, in your judgments and conversation, a scale of your merit or demerit. Are you uncharitable—then how can you expect to be loved ? Are you immodest in your discourse—how can you claim the respect of good men ? Are you full of hatred, severe in your judgments, assuming, self-conceited—how can you believe that any man would attach himself cordially to you ? Men will always be to you, what you are to them.

Now, if you yourself give them, in your words, a scale of your inward worth, how can you be foolish enough to represent yourself in conversation, worse perhaps than you really are at heart ? What perverseness of mind ! Do you strive to be hated ?

Do you solicit disrespect ? Do you labour hard for disgrace ?

Speak with truth and candour ! Give your acquaintances and fellow-citizens no false standard of your worth. Most abominable is that caution in speech which has only for its aim to overreach others, to pretend qualities and feelings which do not exist.

The soul of the hypocrite is like an unceasing malefactor, who, shunning the light, constantly conceals himself in dark holes, in order to escape detection ; who always needs a mask or veil, in order that he may not appear disgusting. And what respect for himself can the miserable man possess, who, on account of his secret baseness, must ever apprehend the contempt and aversion of the world—and with justice ?

Many hold it to be good policy to set themselves up as more charitable, more candid, more friendly, more magnanimous, more tolerant in their words and conversation, than they actually are. This policy, however, has ever led to an abyss. Sooner or later the beautifying mask falls off from the most crafty hypocrite ; and we despise, at last, the tricks of him whose heart we cannot value. We shun the friendly mien, behind which selfishness and malice lurk ; and think the smile most hideous which is intended to conceal a secret ill design.

There is no policy which has been found to stand the test of experience in all circumstances of life, better than honesty, truth, and rectitude. The world only confides in him whom it knows : one offers a heart to him alone who dares to show his heart. Cunning dissimulation and mock friendship are not prudence ; they have only the appearance of it. Subtlety and distrust are opposed to the subtle man. He has lost his game even before he has begun it.

Prudence in speaking is not that mean art with which a man pretends to be better than he is : that insufficient expedient of unworthy men—that deceiving of the world by which a man at last bitterly deceives himself.

Prudence in speaking means the showing of forbearance in deciding on others, where forbearance does no harm : it is the making use of caution, when through inconsiderate talkativeness mischief might be done ; it is the speaking with propriety, in order that, by our words, the benefit of our fellow-creatures may be promoted, or injury averted from them. Still more frequently does true prudence in speaking consist in the *art of being silent at the proper time*.

As much as openness and truth adorn the Christian and engage the confidence of men, the good as well as the bad—even so does an *excessive* zeal

for truth, the want of discretion in speaking, or frivolous talkativeness, alarm and repel them. Truth is sacred and inviolable. It should be spoken every where, when the declaration of it is necessary. But silence should supply its place, when it might occasion misfortune or injury, or destroy the peace of families or nations. Discretion in speaking implies the virtue of silence, when to be silent is more salutary than to speak.

Our own proper feeling soon teaches us what is to be done in every situation of life ; and experience improves our prudence. It is also incomparably easier for men to conduct themselves cunningly, than wisely and honourably. The world daily constrains us to become prudent ; we are induced to be upright and noble-minded only by our own conscience, and a due sense of God and eternity. But the wisest is he whose prudence is the most fruitful.

Yet wisdom and prudence are both demonstrated by *discretion in speaking*. This should, therefore, be the daily object of every Christian. Words are in truth deeds, which God will judge. Therefore should no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. (EPHES. iv. 29.)

If charity and sincerity be the fundamental prin-

ciples of our way of thinking—then is discretion in speaking not difficult to be either acquired or retained. It is not requisite that we should weigh every one of our expressions with anxious circumspection. If charity and veracity dwell within us, then will our words be such as we can answer for before God and our conscience.

As little does religion interdict cheerful conversation and hilarity, which give pleasure to ourselves and others. For cheerful words, arising out of friendly benevolent thoughts, are the proofs of a happy existence. The happy man will make others happy. “*Rejoice with them that do rejoice,*” says the word of God. He who would be called the disciple of Jesus must not be morose, unsociable, or dismal; he must not wear a mournful or a perpetually devotional countenance, in order that he may appear to be pious. Virtue and a sense of godliness are most accustomed to dwell, and are most powerful, in a serene heart. And whoever regards God as a father to whom he dares to attach himself with filial confidence, whose heart is free from bad propensities, and full of the consciousness of being willing to do all the good in his power, he has the highest claim to be joyful. Only let this cheerfulness never degenerate into wantonness: it must not lead to blasphemy, or contempt of that which is held sacred by every good man.

The mouth which praises and adores Thee, O Thou Most Holy One ! the mouth which sighs to Thee for help in the day of tribulation, must not contaminate itself either by unclean discourse, by words of malicious mockery, calumny, hatred, or uncharitable judgment on the weaknesses of our fellow-men. O Most Holy Being, let me be holy, not only in my sentiments, thoughts, and wishes, but also in my speech.

Let truth, love, and prudence, guide my words, as well in hours of joy as in those of sorrow ; that at all times they may fall from my lips in charity ; influence the hearts of others beneficially ; and awaken happiness, contentment, and hilarity, in the breasts of those who live with me in more or less intimate connexion.

XX.

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS.

MATTHEW v. 37.

"But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

WHAT is *Conscientiousness*? The same word is often used for very different things, and understood and interpreted by men in various ways. A right definition, or a precise verbal representation of an idea, is a great assistance to the understanding of it. And he thinks most distinctly, who knows most accurately, with regard to every expression, what idea he should attach to it.

We sometimes call a man conscientious, who is embarrassed about trifling, even indifferent things—and at a loss to know whether he should do them, or omit them. But painful scruples frequently arise out of a natural irresolution of mind, and cannot be the genuine fruit of that Christian virtue which deserves the name of *conscientiousness*. We call, also, that man conscientious, who, for fear of the punishments of Hell, commits no crime; and who,

if through error, and against his will, he should be guilty of a failing, becomes disconsolate and torments himself with anxiety and reproaches. But what must that virtue be, which cannot exist without the fear of judgment and future punishment, and which can furnish no consolation to the penitent mind ?

What is conscientiousness ? It is the having of a conscience, which shows itself active in every part of our conduct. Hence, also, we denominate the vice which is immediately opposed to that virtue, unconscientiousness. And what is conscience ? It is the recognition of right and wrong in our thoughts, words and works.

In order clearly to recognize right and wrong, a proper cultivation of the understanding must precede—without which, the insight into either will be defective. The more the spirit advances to maturity, the more clear are its convictions of truth and falsehood, of good and evil. The faculty of discriminating good from evil exists, however, in every human being. The voice of conscience is heard among all nations—even among those who have never heard the voice of Jesus. For they *“ show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”* (Rom. ii. 15.)

The more distinct the discernment between the allowed and the unallowed, the more keenly and decidedly speaks the conscience. Christians, therefore, who have received the purest instruction from their Lord and Master, should have a conscience tenderly alive to every trespass against the divine will. Where we find a quick and fine perception of what is best—there is already a considerable spiritual advancement. But discrimination of itself is not enough : the spirit must have power to render it practical and lively. The laws of conscience, that is, the convictions of true and false, of good and bad, are the universal laws of the spiritual world. Whoever is subject to them, obeys not a strange law, but his own—he is conscientious. Thus is *conscientiousness* nothing else than fidelity to our inward convictions. The conscientious man is faithful to himself, and does not abandon that which he holds to be right and good.

This virtue—the most unequivocal token of a godly mind—discovers itself in every thought, in every word, in every deed. Yet the Omniscient alone perceives the thought—man hears from man only his word—sees only his action,—and judges him according to their character. Hence, in common life, we call him conscientious who never acts in opposition to his better convictions. But his

convictions we know only, in the first place, by his words. Thus, whoever gives his word and remains true to it; whoever, for all the world could offer, would not venture to break an engagement into which he had entered; whoever would not violate, even in apparently innocent matters, an oath which he had once taken :—him we designate as a conscientious man. He is true to himself and his convictions and his words. He would not be at peace with himself if he once committed acts which stood in opposition to his inward law.

Thus it will now be easy for us to determine who deserves the name of an *unconscientious* man. There is no mortal, indeed, without conscience,—without a sense of right and wrong :—conscience can never be annihilated—it continues firmly fixed even in the breast of the most profligate miscreant. But its voice is too often drowned by the importunity of sensual feelings. The sensual man who desires none but corporeal enjoyments, acts not according to his convictions, but according to interest or inclination. There is a perpetual contradiction between what he holds to be right, and what he does. He is not true to himself—still less to other men. For a temporal advantage he sacrifices his oath and his word; he sacrifices friend and stranger, innocence and honour; and selfishly laughs at the astonishment of those who cannot

comprehend how a reasonable man can live so much at open variance with his better sentiments. His contempt of the most simple and most sacred of all principles—the value of which he neither will nor can deny—makes him only so much the more terrible. He is a moral monster. He acts as if he had no knowledge of his duty. Hence we properly say of him, that he is like a man without conscience.

If I pursue the comparison of the conscientious with the unconscientious man, still further--then will the lustre of the virtue of the one, and the heinousness of the vice of the other, become more distinct. The former, because he never speaks or acts otherwise than agreeably to his own principles, is consistent in all the intercourse and relations of life. Any one may, without difficulty, predict of him, how he will conduct himself, in this or that particular case, according to his conscientious feelings. In the whole history of his life there is plan, order, rectitude, and internal harmony. He gave his word—and the deed follows it like a shadow. He deals with good measure and weight—for he is incapable of fraud or overreaching. He has promised assistance—he performs his promise, even if it be to his own injury. For he values his peace of mind and the harmony in his own bosom, above every secular advantage. He knows

that the former will endure to eternity, but that the latter is dependent on changeable and accidental circumstances. Thus is the conscientious man an image of inward perfection, his innermost self is a world of its own, independent of all outward things—a world ordered and governed by eternal laws. He is, as it were, a divinity in the dominion over his feelings, thoughts, and deeds—ruling them with a full and firm supremacy. In the conduct of the unconscientious man there is no stability—but incessant change;—no fixed principles guide his course—but daily varying contingencies. He enquires not what is right or wrong—but what is his *interest*. A sum of gold which he is to win, has more worth with him than good faith. He forms to-day the most tender friendship—to-morrow he is ashamed of it, because he has fallen into new connexions. To-day he swears by all that is sacred to himself and others—to-morrow he laughs at it, because he finds an advantage in not keeping his oath. He perceives that others are made unhappy through his want of faith—but he is satisfied with having accomplished what he desired, and leaves others to take care of themselves. Thus the unconscientious man presents us with an image of never-ceasing variance with himself: he has no heartfelt peace, no steady thoughts, but his sentiments and views are imparted to him by the

accidental qualities of surrounding objects. He is not to be trusted by any man—for he cannot rely upon himself.

At the first sight, one should believe that the more devoid of conscience a man is, the more free he would be—but he is, in truth, the greater slave. One should believe, that the conscientious man, who is bound by his convictions and his word, restricts himself in the most precious privilege of humanity, that of freedom—but he is, in fact, the most free of mortals.

Who then is free? He who is subject to nobody but himself, and does what he wills. Consequently, that spirit is free, which obeys no foreign commands—but does that only which its own law prescribes. It is subject only to itself. But what is the law of the human spirit? It is the conscience. Whoever judges not according to the persuasions of other men, but according to his own; whoever acts not according to the principles of others, but according to his own—does he not enjoy the fullest freedom? But that which is earthly is foreign to the spirit—it belongs not and has no affinity to the spirit. A man is not, therefore, the less free, when he does not allow himself to be induced either by outward threats or outward allurements, to act according to another's will, and inconsistently with his own—when neither the most enviable comforts and

pleasures, nor domestic advantages, nor any other interest in social life, can tempt him to do what his God approves not, and cannot approve,—because it is sinful.

Let it be said that the conscientious man is still a slave to his word—a slave to his principles. What does that signify? Admitted that he is under his own dominion, and not another's:—is he who belongs to himself and to no other besides himself, to be called a slave? He is most free. Who else can be considered so?

The unconscientious man, indeed, appears to be still more free: nothing seems to fetter him—no fear of God or man, no duty, no honour—not even his own word. Yes—the unconscientious man is free—free as the leaf fallen into the stream of sporting billows. It has no rest—it cannot calm the waves—it fluctuates with them in all directions—it rises as they rise, and sinks as they sink.

Thus is he, who is without independent firmness, made the sport of the waves of life. To him circumstances are not subservient, but he is their creature. According to them he changes his opinions and desires. To-day he is a sensualist—to-morrow he casts off the victim of his brutal pleasures—because he has some new object of interest to pursue. It is always the propensities which originate in his flesh and blood, that rule his spirit; and the spirit

is without any controuling power over his propensities. He is always a slave to his money, his love of popularity, his corporeal inclinations, his gluttony, or his costly clothes and furniture—always a slave to the present moment, to present interest, to present humour. To them only is he devoted, with all his thoughts and wishes :—by their influence only is his will directed. Does he deserve the name of free ? Ah ! so is the wild beast free, which, without any knowledge of better things, does whatever instinct teaches him to do. No ! he is a slave ! who could otherwise be called so, if he be not, who is not even master of his own feelings and desires,—who perpetually commits high treason against himself, and acts of infidelity against his disapproving conscience ?

Conscientiousness, therefore, is not so much to be esteemed a particular virtue, as the crown of virtues, in which they are all resplendent ; *it is the extent of perfection of which a man is capable* ; it is the true life of an active spirit ; it is the sceptre of its dominion over earthly things ; it is the name of its highest qualities, the character of its peculiar freedom. Whoever acts rightly, whoever performs his duty, is conscientious. Whoever follows none but his own principles ; whoever refuses to set them aside for the sake of any low pleasure or advantage ; whoever is incapable of being untrue to

his better-self—he is conscientious ; is complete in himself ; is superior to the world of sense ; is worthy of veneration, and is really free. To strive after this elevation is the aim of all wise men—is the Christian's object. Without conscientiousness, Christianity is mere hypocrisy—a dead work of the lips—a self-deceit. It is not sufficient to have a conscience ; every thing must be done according to the law of conscience. Other virtues can reach a higher or lower degree of perfection—so also can this. Two things are included in Christian conscientiousness—knowledge of what is true and good, and fortitude of mind. We must cultivate both of these, if the perfecting of our nature in a blessed eternity be of any moment in our eyes.

Extend and correct, also, your former knowledge of what is true and good. No one can be so absurdly proud of himself as to believe, that he already knows well enough how to discriminate evil from good, sin from virtue. No ; there is here, as in all things, a possibility of progression from less to greater. Even the child knows in general what is right and wrong, but it has too little clear conception, or too little experience ; and is hence often in error in the application of his ideas of good and evil, or doubtful what is really right in this or that particular case. With increasing years his views are enlarged, and his

ideas become connected. Thus also can the man of maturer age continue to improve his perceptions of right and wrong.

In the bustle of daily life, one or other of our branches of knowledge becomes more or less obscure, and repressed, as it were, into the background of the soul. We do not always perceive with proper distinctness, how we can act in this or that instance according to the strict rule of obligation. We act, therefore, I will not say, carelessly—but often in a general way, in the dark, and at random; and not till afterwards do we feel, on more serious meditation, or in the experience of ensuing evils, how much better we might otherwise have done and thought. Hence, even to the best instructed Christian, or the most learned man, it is by no means superfluous to employ, from time to time, the hours which are devoted to the improvement and sanctification of his mind, in reading religious books, in which the duties of men are forcibly explained; by no means superfluous to frequent the assemblies of Christians which are dedicated to the worship of God, and in which the divine word is publicly expounded: for much that had become obscure and forgotten in the lapse of time, is there unexpectedly again presented to our consideration, and many a slumbering thought is awakened to fresh activity. Although we do not always learn

from pious books, or from the best discourses, any thing altogether new ; yet they revive recollections in our mind, and arouse our spirit from a state of inactivity. This is so much the more the case, since persons of the best education often err in their ideas of right and wrong, of worth and worthlessness, through prejudices which are predominant at one time, and are dismissed at another. A sense of delicacy, for instance, is often blunted by custom, fashion, or the daily sight of what is bad : it may be thus explained how young women, who have not yet been corrupted by any unholy thoughts, may in such a manner lose all feeling of modesty as, in order to conform to a dangerous fashion, to allow themselves indelicate modes of dress, which are even disgusting in the eyes of men.

The frequenting of the public worship of God, and the reading of edifying books, are worthy of the most learned man. He shows thereby a modest persuasion that he is not to consider himself as perfect ; that in his ideas of the connexion and nature of his several duties, on which, perhaps, he wants the leisure or opportunity to meditate seriously, he has yet much confusion to be rectified ; that many a forgotten thing is to be brought back to his memory, which otherwise would have remained neglected ; that his perception of what is honourable and right, which, through prejudice,

custom, or fashion, may have lost its purity and acuteness, can yet be purified, and rendered vivid.

The clearer, and more extensive, and more settled is our knowledge of good and truth, of the greater tenderness and keenness is our conscience capable ; the nearer does the spirit border on perfection. Circumscribed and rude as is the intelligence of the ignorant savage of the desert, so is his sense of right and wrong. Men of better education do not readily allow and forgive themselves what the uncultivated man commits without its appearing offensive to him. To be a drunkard, the latter considers scarcely as a disgrace ; a cunning trick which is profitable to him, as scarcely dishonest ; anger and misconduct towards his family, as scarcely sins. He is too much like the beast of the earth to reproach himself with such matters as these ; his mental power is too little developed, his intellect is too confined. The extension and correction of our former knowledge of what is good and true, is therefore a first condition, without which no genuine and tender conscientiousness is imaginable. But the mere intellect alone is not capable of all that is requisite. We find but too frequently in common life, that neither the hearers nor the teachers of the Divine Word, are doers of the same ; that people of the most excellent abilities have often the most foibles ; nay, sometimes are the most unconscientious slaves

of their senses. There is wanting in them what is often forcibly displayed by the less instructed—greatness of soul, and power of mind.

Increase and extend the power of your spirit over all earthly things: without it no conscientiousness can possibly exist. What would avail the most excellent codes of law, unless they were carried into execution? If your spirit be not sufficiently powerful to follow its convictions of what is true and good, and to conquer the desires of the body—what do the finest convictions avail? They increase its culpability, and render it so much the more inexcusable both with regard to itself and others.

Now strength increases, not by instruction, but by exercise. If a man carry a heavy weight every day, his shoulder becomes at length able to lift a still heavier one; a weight at which a weak man is astonished.

Exercise yourself, therefore, uninterruptedly in willing and acting according to your better convictions, and not according to the insinuations of your unrighteous desires, of your selfish humours. Exercise yourself daily in bringing your outward actions into perfect consistency with your ideas of what is right and wrong. When you wish to make a resolution, never ask first: ‘*Is it advantageous?*’ but be sure to ask ‘*Is it right?*’ Listen to the

judgment of your conscience—it will speak to you firmly and unreservedly—it will say : ‘ Do not so—it is dishonourable. You would not do it before the eyes of the whole world—not before the eyes of your better acquaintances, without a strong sense of shame.’ Relinquish, then, the wish condemned by your conscience. Do not ask afterwards, whether it would have afforded you pleasure or profit. No ; what is disgraceful in itself cannot give true pleasure to any Christian, to any mind that is worthy of immortality. What is wrong can never be profitable. Whoever even inquires after interest and pleasure, when his conscience has already given sentence against his criminal thoughts and wishes, he is about basely to sell his soul and its exalted hopes, for a transitory gratification.

Exercise yourself daily in being true to yourself—restrain your lips from ever speaking otherwise than you think. We should, indeed, never thoughtlessly utter all we think, but we should think what we do speak. And, as the word of your mouth is the true reflection of your thought, so let your deed be, as it were, the distant echo of your words.

Exercise yourself in abstaining from every thing which you consider unallowable, that you may not step beyond the delicate boundary-line of duty. And if, at any time, you should transgress through ignorance or error, or through overhaste, and too

great vivacity ; rest not till you have made ample amends for your wrong, and have restored harmony between your actions and your principles. *This is to be conscientious !*

Accustom yourself not to consider any thing in life as *admirable* but what is *good*—any thing *useful*, but *truth*—any thing *pleasurable and delightful*, but what is *allowable*—any thing as *honourable*, but what is *just*—any thing as *worthy of envy*, but *virtue*—any thing as *unhappiness*, but *sin*. By such exercise will your spiritual strength increase, and you will experience moments, when, lord of the storm which rages in your senses, raised above the prejudices, terrors, and joys of the world, you will feel the highest bliss of which the human mind is capable beneath the heavens—the soul's harmony with itself, with the whole creation, and with God its creator.

And always do I return to Thee, O Jesus Christ ! For when I think of the most sublime perfection to which human nature can attain, how can I do otherwise than look to Thee ? Conscientiousness was the leading trait in the picture of Thy life, and produced therein admirable unity and effect. Thy first public word, as well as Thy last, which dying Thou didst utter on the cross, was demonstrative of the same mode of thinking, and testified the sublime immutability of Thy mind. Conscientiousness

guided Thee in the fulfilment of the divine mission to the human race, through persecution and a triumphant death. Thy discourses were an echo of Thy thoughts, and Thy deeds a re-echo of Thy words. What Thou didst promise was performed. In the plenitude of divine independence, pleasures, honours, possessions, goods, and profits, were to Thee only secondary matters. Independent of all earthly things, without despising the proper use of them, Thou didst prove Thyself to have that freedom which is the property of a heavenly mind; a mind which despises fetters, tortures, and even death itself.

In Thy *conscientiousness* will I follow Thee, that I may become like unto Thee, O Jesus, and like unto that heavenly Father, who is pleased to impart to me the power of His sanctifying grace—even to me a feeble creature. Amen.

XXI.

THE YOUNG MAN.

PROVERBS ii. 1—5.

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

'WILL the times become better or worse?' This is a question which every now and then is proposed; and which, in general, is answered very differently.

The times are in themselves neither good nor evil. They are made what they are, by those who use them. We should rather ask, therefore: '*will men become better or worse?*'

What the times and men will be in future, depends in some degree on the men who live at present. They lay the foundation for the fate of their posterity by their virtues or vices, by their discernment or errors, by their moral strength or

effeminacy. One generation is the source of another morally as well as physically. Ye parents who take an interest in the future welfare of your children, it is you alone who can insure to yourselves perfect tranquillity on their account. Only ask yourselves whether you have fulfilled your parental duties towards your children to their full extent. The question is not whether you procured them a sufficient income, or whether you will leave them an ample fortune, but whether you have so *turned their minds to God and virtue*, that they shall not abandon the sanctuary erected in their hearts ; whether you have so instructed them, and caused their understanding to expand, *that they shall acquire as much as possible* in their actual situation ; whether you have so accustomed them to moderation and hardihood, *that without difficulty they can dispense with as much as possible*. Can you answer this question in the affirmative, with your hand upon your heart ? Then is the fortune of your children made ; and it is established on a firm foundation. You may confidently cast your remaining cares on the Eternal Father : He will do well by them, as He has done by you.

Will the times become better or worse ? This depends on the improvement or deterioration of our posterity. Above all things observe the youth of your community. In their morals, their incli-

nations, their cultivation, and their employments, you will read, as in a prophetic mirror, the good or bad condition of your town or village in future generations,—of which, perhaps, you may no longer be eye-witnesses.

Observe the young people as they pass before you. You must not, indeed, judge too severely the folly of their age; not too severely, if some of them yield to the impetuosity of their feelings, and perhaps give the reins to licentiousness in a manner far from justifiable. Who knows not the follies which usually accompany the age, at which an individual is yet half-child, half-man, and lives for the most part under the delusions of a too lively imagination? Ye angry parents, think of the time when you were young. Watch, however, over these youths, to ascertain whether a sense and love of honour and uprightness actuate their hearts; or whether the charms of virtue, and the sublimity of religious impressions, be entirely indifferent to them. Watch them, to see whether the inclination to substantial knowledge and useful works predominate in their mind; or whether, being too much enervated for severe exercise, they have a propensity to idleness and good living. Observe whether they have a greater tendency to noble enjoyments, which invigorate the heart and soul, together with the body; or whether they most willingly and frequently

resign themselves a prey to unruly passions ; which poison and debilitate the soul, through the medium of the body.

A painful sensation pierces the heart of him who is his country's friend, when he sees the hopes of his native land already withered in the bloom, by the consuming mildew of habitual vice : when he beholds how the youth of the village—growing up in brutal rudeness, and neglected in their education—waste in ignorance and vice the most lovely season of their life ; how they run from the plough to gambling and drunken revels—know nothing of religion but the empty form of prayer and public worship ; and unhappily combine the wildness of their youthful blood with the cool criminal determination of maturer age—the weakness of their understanding, with the pernicious prejudices and superstitions of the old. It pierces the heart of a friend to his country, when he sees the youth of the lower ranks in towns, no better brought up than those of villages ; when he sees how they unite the rudeness of the one class with the refined excesses of the other, for distinction's sake ; when he sees how the sons of the higher and richer classes shun the rigour of salutary exertion, and fill their imaginations with the sensual dreams of bad books,—make diversions and fashion the chief business of their life,—and regard with disgust any useful em-

ployment, or occupation of their idle hours ; when he sees how—far from taking any pride in magnanimity and mental power, self-denial, and nobleness of spirit—they only amuse themselves with immoral entertainments, are proud of being the most experienced in every kind of wantonness and excess, think it glorious to squander thoughtlessly the best hours of their existence, and the patrimony of their fathers ; and, at most, bear the yoke of industry, in order that they may be able to spend their money more extravagantly.

Still the number of these unhopeful and degenerate youth, who are no honour either to their race or country, is much the smallest. Far greater is the number of those who, without distinguishing themselves either as notorious in what is bad, or eminent in good, go on in the ways of their fathers and forefathers. But there are many also, among the sons of the nobility, who raise themselves above the common herd by their intellectual powers, their assiduity in business, their simplicity of morals—by their honourable ambition to bring prosperity to their own family, glory to the house of their fathers, and blessings on their country.

YOUNG MAN! whoever you may be into whose hands these lines may fall—do you trust in the power of an all-ruling Providence? This Providence it is, and not chance, which has put these pages

into your hand ! Cast them not from you ! They contain a word, which may fix the destiny of your life. The man who speaks this word to you, was once young, and experienced all the delights, all the difficult circumstances, incident to his station. But it is not only as a man that he speaks to you,—for he is the organ of the Deity. The Deity speaks to your soul—that Deity whose creature you are, and whose discerning eye continually watches over you !

The matter, here in question, is one, which involves your future life, your eternal happiness, or your certain ruin,—all the most important considerations which can be presented to your mind :—and this is comprehended in the single word, RELIGION !

This word is not strange to you ; nor are thoughts of God and Eternity, nor awful reflections on the fate of your soul—with regard to which some restless doubts may have silently stolen upon your conscience. Your heart beats higher under these recollections, than your mouth is willing to confess.

Fear not that this word which I have to impress upon your soul, will be an introduction to dismal admonitions to renounce the pleasures of youthful life, to alter your nature, and to render you anxious, thoughtful, and cold,—like a veteran. No ;—religion forbids not your enjoyments, so long as they neither disgrace yourself nor are injurious to the

honour, peace, and happiness of others. But if they were thus pernicious—must you not then yourself curse such criminal indulgences ? Fear not that the voice of religion will frighten you with the images of death and decay. No ;—these images have often made your spirit seek refuge in prayer, because in such moments you were not warmed by the convictions of a higher faith. To him who preserves this sublime faith in his bosom—to him not only will life be serene, but death itself will be welcome.

Believe me—every man, without exception, knows and acknowledges some religious feelings—even the ruthless profligate, in the hour of solitude :—although openly, to give himself the appearance of an enlightened person, he may deride religion and religious usages. Be you much more proud of bearing in your bosom a loftier faith—a belief that you are destined to become a more perfect being—a belief in God and in Eternity.

It is possible that doubts may sometimes disturb you. It is natural that this should happen when the soul liberates itself from the ideas of childhood, and struggles to obtain the better founded convictions of the age of manhood. Still your doubts are but doubts—not truths. You step out from the darkness of early youth, in which, probably, you saw little of the intellectual light of a later age. It blinds you—you wander in the twilight : you

cannot lay aside the imaginations of your childhood, and the eye of your soul is not yet strong enough to see clearly in the broader day. Hence the doubts of half-enlightenment—hence your uneasiness. More distinct perception reconciles you to yourself—carries you back to the over-ruling Deity—animates you with that heavenly spirit which pervaded the conduct and doctrines of Jesus—and points upwards to an everlasting existence. You are impressed with the truth of Religion—and no doubts torment you.

You are impressed with the truth of Religion even when doubts do make you anxious: for these doubts are not the offspring of your heart, but of your defective understanding, which, by the force of imagination, would comprehend the infinite, and span the boundless. You become perplexed at the high concerns of man—with the obligations of religion; because you have been perplexed with yourself and your own powers of mind. You stood shuddering on the limit of human knowledge, and dissatisfied with the faith and aspirations of your heart. The Creator gave both knowledge and faith to you and to all the race of mortals. If you would overleap the limits of a finite state, and penetrate the mystery of the universe, you must be God Himself.

You have religion planted in your breast—you

cannot reason away your own soul from your body—the Godhead from the universe—truth from the sublime doctrines of Jesus Christ.

Young man!—yet one step more. Have courage to be true to yourself. This determination adorns the man, beautifies the matron, and makes the aged venerable. But a religious youth is the object of esteem with all—for piety indicates in him a power of heart, which one should hardly expect from his years—a courage which bids defiance to the levity of those of his own age—a strength of mind, which seeks no concealment, but shines forth in every word and wish and deed.

Do not, however, force your persuasions on others—but keep them as a sacred jewel in your heart: and as you expect that no man shall rob you of this jewel, or profane it by mockery, but that it shall, at least, be honoured by respectful silence—so do you respect the religious sentiments, and even the religious usages of your fellow-creatures. Such usages are venerable, because they have at all times a salutary influence on rational beings—stronger or weaker according to their manners and different dispositions. Observe, therefore, the rules of your Church, under a conviction of their utility. Esteem it an honour openly to testify of what opinion you are. Seclude not yourself from the congregation of Christians; and blush not, with false,

ridiculous shame, to visit the holy place—the Temple of the Lord—in which your father, and perhaps your grandfather, have often lifted up their souls to the Eternal in prayer for *you*—where many a sigh of an affectionate mother has fled upwards to Heaven on your behalf.

Confess Religion in your sentiments, and you will see the last doubts vanish, which before, perhaps, tormented you—you will recover your happiness and peace in the silent, childlike faith of a pure mind—you will regain the tranquillity which you may have lost in the chimeras of your imagination, or the reveries of a mistaken understanding.

Confess Religion in your words. Avoid all rash, foolish mockery of what is most sacred to the human mind; and learn to believe that the humility with which the most ignorant creature bends before the Majesty of the Omnipotent, is not less worthy of respect than the most sublimely conceived prayer of the wisest of men—that the mite of the poor widow, which she cast into God's treasury, has not less value than the heap of gold which the Pharisee ostentatiously distributes in public charities. There is but one God—to whom all human beings pray, though with different conceptions of his nature and attributes. God does not so much regard what they pray for, as how they pray. Thus an earthly father listens to his children with like love, whether

when grown up, they present their distinct petitions to him, or in infancy stammer out their little wishes on his knee.

Confess your religious feelings in your actions! Not what you think, but what you do, is true Religion. “*By their fruits ye shall know them,*” said Jesus. Without good actions your best thoughts were worthless—without good works, the best faith were vain.

It is more difficult for you, than for old men, always to act so as to be satisfied with yourself. At one time you take a false step, because for want of experience and necessary circumspection you deceive yourself; at another time, because the vivacity of your feelings carries you beyond what you yourself would wish. So much more important to you is sedateness in your actions—self-possession in your dealings and conversation. This self-possession is difficult to acquire;—but by habit and strict precaution you will at length find it attainable. The first and most certain step towards this virtue—which will raise you above the level of your age,—is to be silent when a sensation is about to overpower you—not to speak or act when you feel that you have lost your composure of mind. Thus in joy, and thus in sorrow, has bitter experience already taught you how many embarrassments you would have escaped, if you had

possessed self-command. Exercise yourself in this self-command, and you have laid the foundation of your happiness. But if you despair of yourself—if you are too indolent, too self-willed to govern yourself in every thing—then go ! be the slave of your basest feelings ; and do not hereafter accuse Providence, if you live a life of vexation and bitterness. You who are a slave to your humours, your fancies, and your lusts—*you* are the destroyer of your own happiness.

Young man ! it is a great thing to inspire others with respect. Your efforts are directed towards distinctions and honours. You have the means of acquiring them in your own power. Practise self-government, that repentance may not one day overtake you. You may, indeed, often be wanting in sufficient prudence to calculate all the circumstances and consequences attendant on your words and actions—various kinds of experience are requisite, in order to appreciate every thing properly. But if necessary *worldly wisdom* and a knowledge of men be, at times, wanting to you—recollect that there is something higher than human prudence, to the possession of which you may easily attain,—something higher, which will never suffer you to err in your proceedings ; while the prudence of the most subtle—the deepest knowledge of mankind—often deceives its possessor ;—something higher,

which surpasses all experience. This is *the heavenly wisdom* which pervades the Revelations of Jesus Christ. “*All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*” (MATT. vii. 12.) Avoid all injustice, whatever name it may bear; be indulgent in your opinions of others—strict in your judgment on yourself; be true and faithful in the words you use—cautious in interpreting the expressions you hear; be humane in your actions towards the unknown,—manly and honest to your friends,—generous to your enemies. Defend your rights without bitterness; and never deny the just claims of your opponent.

This, young man, is Christianity! And these few words comprehend it all: ‘Love God above all things, and your fellow-creatures as yourself.’ Serve your brethren in their different stations, as you would serve yourself, if you were in their place.

It is easy to act honourably and wisely, when we have before us examples of what is honourable and wise: it is difficult, almost impossible, to preserve unsullied integrity and nobleness of heart, if we have continually under our eyes examples of what is bad and base. That which at first excited disgust, at last becomes, through custom, indifferent to us. And he who is rendered indifferent to what is bad, is himself no longer good.

Be cautious, then, in the choice of your acquaint-

ance. Keep free from the company of which your own uncorrupted feelings warn you that it is objectionable and dangerous. You must have no friend, or only one whose way of thinking improves your own, and from whose society you may hope to gain something advantageous to your heart and soul. A friend who is not in some respects superior to yourself, hinders you in the road to perfection. A friend who is, in many things, more fallible than yourself, carries you backwards in your course.

Be most careful in company with persons of the other sex. The excellent among them will improve you far quicker than your most virtuous friend; the bad among them will corrupt you much sooner than the worst among your male acquaintance. The good you can only please by innocence; and this innocence of mind alone will give an elevation and amiableness to your character, which you would strive in vain to acquire by all the arts of, what is called, refined life, and the insipid language of flattery and adulation.

Respect yourself in the society of persons of a different sex. Trifle not with your affections, which should be the most sacred, because you are, perhaps, at some future time to devote them to a virtuous wife; be master of yourself, and do not suffer a blind passion to subjugate and occupy your mind—a passion which exposes you to the mockery

of others, and degrades you into an object of just contempt. Render not yourself effeminate by unmanly, sentimental nonsense. Deceive not yourself with the delusions of your own vanity : still less become a criminal intruder on the peace of a happy heart, by endeavouring to excite a passion in it which your circumstances do not permit you to justify.

Young man, if you feel a love which is worthy of you, then honour the innocence, the good name, the repose, the happy tranquillity of mind of the beloved one, so much the more in proportion as you really love her. Can love desire the misery of its object ? Subdue yourself—be silent—keep at a distance—and be an honourable man. This magnanimity will make you justly satisfied with yourself—you will enjoy the good fortune of being admired and thought amiable without disturbing the peace of another's heart, or of your own, by the insinuations of vanity.

Keep your body as pure as your heart. Woe ! if the curse of lust inflame your blood, and you fall a sacrifice to sensual pleasures—false to yourself—false to the anxious wishes of your parents—false to your God ! Could you associate with the innocent of your own age without a blush and inward reproaches ? Could you give your hand in lasting union to a virtuous woman with a pure conscience ? Respect yourself, and you will be respected ! The

heavenly feeling of purity of mind imparts far higher bliss, than the debaucheries of the reprobate. The consciousness of innocence is the greatest pleasure.

Young man! some of my words may have reached the inmost recesses of your heart. If you feel them, perpetuate their impression. Become great and good; be the glory of your house, the pride of your relations, the ornament of your country. It lies in your power. Behold your life is spread out before you—you yet hope for a bright futurity. Do not yourself destroy these hopes. Young man! this is a momentous word, drawn deep from the fountain of all knowledge : *You will be as unhappy as others, alas ! have been, if you be no better than they !* Engrave this truth upon your memory, and think on it whenever you happen to be in difficulty and embarrassment, through your own fault and passions. Think of it, if the pain of self-incurred evil draw tears from your eyes, or bitter repentance deliver you over to despair. Think of it, if you have chosen, instead of the real freedom of self-controul, abject slavery in the chains of your carnal passions—instead of prudence in word and deed, blameable levity in both—instead of the sweet feelings of innocence, the gnawing reproaches of a conscience, which was designed for your source of happiness.

XXII.

THE YOUNG WOMAN.

1 PETER iii. 3, 4.

" Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

To you, also, Christian maiden, will I address myself—to you who are yet arrayed with all the ornaments of youth, surrounded, perhaps, by flatterers—to you, YOUNG WOMAN, who are now, perhaps, the fairest hope, or the most anxious care, of your parents and relations.

Throw not this page aside unread—it speaks to you of your fate, your prospects, your present and future fortune. Throw not this page aside unread—it is a word of counsel from that all-ruling Providence, which put it into your hand. Its contents may possibly save you from dangers over which you wander, as over a concealed abyss; its contents may chance to afford you a remedy for some

secret pain which preys upon your mind ; its contents may prepare you to meet with firmness and composure, any event which awaits you in the future.

Far more uncertain is the fate of the young woman, than that of the young man. The young man enters on the intricate course of life in the full enjoyment of his mental and corporeal powers: he selects the calling by which he desires to procure an honest livelihood ; chooses with freedom the means which appear best adapted to his objects, and singles out the wife—the companion of his days—who suits his inclinations. But not so the young woman. Seldom can she, of her own accord, determine her lot in life ; she must await it in silence : seldom can she choose the man in union with whom she would most willingly share her joys and sorrows. She is chosen. Seldom has she sufficient independent means to support and protect herself. She is supported, she is protected, as a member of the sex which is by nature more tender, more dependent, and less capable of acting amidst the storms of social life. She is, as it were, in a continued minority in the eye of the law ; and must confide her public affairs to strangers, in order to have them properly managed and defended.

How uncertain, therefore, is the lot of the young woman, even at the time when she has living parents of respectability and fortune ! How tottering

is the foundation of her future prosperity, when it depends on the concurrence of so many various circumstances. She knows not to-day how long she may enjoy the protection and care of her parents and relations ; she knows not whether she may become the wife of such a man as her heart approves, and her way of thinking and feeling makes necessary to her happiness.

It is so much the more important that she should, in solitary moments of self-reflection, cast an earnest look upon her present and probable condition ;—that she should arm herself with stedfast resolution to meet undauntedly and wisely any destiny that may befall her ;—that she should render herself worthy of the highest happiness, even if she should never reach it ;—that she should prepare herself never *to be entirely unhappy*, even in the worst chance, if all her hopes be wrecked, and all her fears be verified.

But the beginning must be early made ; for, to attain to excellence, is not the work of a moment. For this purpose, early seriousness, early self-possession, are absolutely requisite. We do not acquire these qualities in a day—just when we want them. The young woman must be accustomed, from her earliest years, to make her happiness independent of all outward things ; she must lay the foundation of it in her own heart, if she wish to

retain it, as a wife, as a mother, as the head of a household, or even in an unmarried state.

She is already, in the bloom of her age, surrounded by dangers, which in themselves often appear very insignificant, but have an unspeakably powerful influence over her future years. She has already to take the greatest pains to secure an *uncorrupted heart, and uncorrupted understanding*, amidst various seductive circumstances and examples. For it is only by the loss of these two treasures, that she can, in truth, be made unhappy.

Purity of heart, the highest excellence in a man, is the young woman's most becoming and precious ornament. Even she who is not endowed with beauty, is rendered amiable by this purity ; and all personal graces lose their charm, if the elegant figure bear a heart infected with bad passions, ill humours, and improper feelings.

The word in which all that is noble, all that is lovely, in woman, is expressed—is INNOCENCE. It is the young woman's best decoration—it is the groundwork of all female virtues. The profligate feels respect, the barbarian reverence, for the delicate being who is yet surrounded by the majesty of female honour. The woman is *utterly lost*—she is both loudly and silently reprobated by all—if she be dishonoured. If she do not meet with con-

tempt on all sides, she meets with compassion which is not less mortifying. The better so people shrug up their shoulders in pity, and worse give loose to derision, and the laugh of scorn, and forget not to relate the story of her disgrace even after many years—even over the coffin of an unhappy object.

Honour yourself and your female dignity, daughter ; and you will preserve your amiability even when by years your youthful graces are diminished. Learn to detect the dangers which threaten your innocence, and to meet them with the weapons which are in your power—*modesty, chastity, morality*. Honour those feelings which the hand of God Himself implanted in your breast, and beware of violating them. You would become contemptible if you did so, contemptible to yourself, to your family, and even to men.

Shun all *company* in which the laws of propriety are forgotten ; avoid conversations, even with companions and friends, for which you would blush, if a third person were to hear them. A *flatterer*, who pretends to be ravished with your beauty, and after all have no other motive than to instil gradually into your mind inclinations and passions, by which at last you would be led to forget yourself, and become the prey of their licentious designs.


Often do fashions, invented in the corruption of great cities, demand a style of dress at which the uncorrupted youth and noble-minded man cast down their eyes with blushes or aversion. O young women ! who are misled by vanity and tasteless fashion, can you meet with a greater degradation than to hear it observed, that men are more modest than you, and excel you in a virtue which should constitute your brightest ornament ? Fashions vary every year—modesty has been, for thousands of years, woman's peculiar pride.

Be modest, however, not only before others, but before *yourself* ! Abhor every *recollection* which may awaken unholy thoughts—fly from all *immodest ideas*, and disperse them by useful activity or serious contemplation. Woe ! if you stain your soul with thoughts which you would certainly blush to utter—you are already in the way to destruction—you have already lost your true innocence ; you are no longer pure in your own sight, nor in that of your omniscient God ; and you deceive, by the propriety of your outward conduct, those who know but little of you.

To preserve the innocence of your mind, secure the *uncorrupted state of your understanding*. Seek not for the cultivation of your mind in ways which often produce the reverse of cultivation ; long not after knowledge which helps you little in the improvement of domestic happiness ;

desire not a degree of cleverness and attainment which no one looks for, or requires in you. Read no writings or books which have not been recommended by some honest friend. Above all, guard yourself against the influence of those works which are written merely for the amusement of the imagination. They teach you little of the world, as it is—but much of the frequently immoral dreams of the idler; they give you false ideas of real life; they represent depraved morals, which you should rather avoid than copy. They imperceptibly raise to excess your expectations from the world; they change your naturally good feelings into exaggerated sentimentality; they fill your imagination with useless, often hurtful, images. Through their influence you accustom yourself to think, to wish, and to feel, in an eccentric way; real life appears mean and disagreeable to you; the society of those with whom you live becomes incapable of affording you enjoyment. In every thing you find something to blame, because it does not answer to the ideas you have drawn from common novels. Instead of forming your mind, you would by such imprudent study only spoil yourself—you would become not more but less useful in the world; in short, you would become not more noble-minded but more foolish.

Many young women have, by this means, unconsciously laid the foundation of their domestic r



sery. They could not easily reconcile themselves again to their station, to their destination, to their daily occupations. They remained unmarried, because they rejected the hand of some honourable man who did not fall in with their visionary ideas of a future husband ; or they were obliged to give themselves, at last, to a less worthy and accomplished person ; or they became afterwards, even in the married state, fantastic, intolerable, bad wives, bad mothers, whose wishes were to shine in society, rather than fulfil as perfectly as possible the duties of their situation.

The best accomplishment which the young female can, and should by all means, acquire, is a suitable preparation for her future life, as an experienced, skilful housewife, as a wise manager of children—a qualification for supporting herself by her own useful attainments, in case, after the death of her parents, relations, or husband, or in an unmarried state, the support of strangers or friends should fail. This most valuable ability we are justified in expecting from the education of a moral woman—and this it is which every female must, in the first place, endeavour to secure for herself. Many an hour may probably be spared, in order that higher cultivation, according to the several ranks of society, may in no respect be neglected. But this mental cultivation consists not in an acquaint-

ance with fanciful histories and imaginary even which oftentimes are deficient in probability, s oftener in every thing that is capable of commu cating good ; but in the information of the und standing,—in the extension of the knowledge nature and its divine magnificence,—in the corr and modest opinion of mankind, and in the kno ledge of oneself.

The occupations of a woman require thoug prudence, foresight and perseverance. It is wom upon whose wise judgment and actions almost the peace, the tranquillity, and the happiness domestic life depend—without which no perm nent prosperity is to be imagined. All knowled which may lead to this, should the young wom endeavour to attain :—never should she lose sig of the greatness and importance of the female d tinctive character. *This is genuine cultivation.*

It is the destination of a young woman to diffu around her, in her sphere of action, the spirit grace, order, and cleanliness—the spirit of concor serenity, and consolation. The destination of woman is, in conjugal union, to be the partaker the weal or woe of her husband ; to augment a heighten his joys ; to give him a compensation home, for the wearisomeness of his cares and l bours ; to soothe his impetuosity, and to raise l sinking spirits. The destination of a woman is, as

mother, to contribute most essentially to the improvement of the hearts and understandings of her children ; as a wife, to treat her husband with tenderness, her children with love and prudence, her domestics with dignified affability ; to behave towards all, who have any connexion with her family, with captivating kindness—and by this means to gain the esteem of all.

Truly, this calling is one of the most honourable and sacred in human society ! Truly, these duties demand a prudence, knowledge, and experience, which are not easy of acquirement ! And this calling it is—these duties it is, to which the young woman is naturally destined.

How laboriously does the youth prepare for his future profession, in schools and apprenticeship, before he is sufficiently perfect to pursue it. How many severe hours are necessary to be spent in learning the business which he is one day to carry on ! Shall, then, the daughter, with a no less weighty calling, with no less important duties—shall she, while living in the house of her parents, neglect herself with impunity ?—should she be contented with having barely learnt the management of simple domestic affairs, in order that she may waste her remaining hours in idleness or diversion, in useless reading, or the petty concerns of coquetry and dress ?

When we behold so many unhappy marriages, and see domestic tranquillity so often disturbed, children so often spoiled, eminent prosperity and flourishing business so often totally destroyed—is not this also the fault of the female sex, who without any proper knowledge of their destination, after a thoughtless trifling childhood and giddy youth, without any substantial feminine accomplishments, sometimes even with a contaminated soul and a corrupted heart, enter upon the important obligations of married life?

O young Christian! you who now stand on the threshold of your destiny, remember your calling; and be assured that you will not have to thank your future spouse for your happiness—nor his condition, nor his fortune—so much as those qualifications and virtues which you have already, as a young woman, acquired for yourself. Remember, that these virtues are the most precious fortune you can ever bring to a bridegroom. Remember, that you may at some time lose every other happiness, but cannot be deprived of that, which you have founded in your own heart, by your own power and principles. Therefore, as the young man is taught in school and apprenticeship, so do you exercise yourself beforehand, in your domestic station, to become *the most worthy of your sex*. Acquire for yourself an ornament which does not pass away

with years, does not alter with the fashion, but renders you, even as an aged matron, an object of affectionate esteem.

"Whose adorning," so speaks the Divine Word impressively, *"let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."* (1 PET. iii. 3, 4.)

Let *beauty of soul* be more highly valued by you, than beauty of person; by that you will win souls. A graceful form, and a pretty countenance, charm, perhaps only for a while, the outward senses.

Learn, young woman, even now to practise the most delightful and beneficial of all virtues in the station in which you are placed, whether as a daughter, as a sister, as a relation, or among your friends;—that is, by modest, meek interference, to prevent dissensions, to restore friendship and peace, to promote love and gentleness amongst all. Set the example; captivate all by your love and goodness, and no one will venture to cause you pain—you will lead all, by your mild words, to better things—you will become the protecting angel of domestic happiness. Search into the sources of the usual quarrels, which occur in your own family,

or among your friends, and do not rest until by perseverance, even if the necessity for it should last for weeks, or months, or years,—by prudence and tender forbearance—you have gradually annihilated the sources of discord.

Learn, young woman, to bear with patience and gentleness whatever it is not in your power to alter.

Perhaps you suffer, even from your parents and sisters—behave towards them with meekness and propriety. You are unable by your own influence to change their opinion ; your threats do not alarm any one ; your instruction is not desired by any one : your contradiction, your caprice, your anger, will only embitter them the more. Learn to bear with patience and serenity, what you cannot alter. Your yielding will at length exhaust their anger ; your serenity will at last touch and weaken their hard-heartedness ; your love, your obedience, your tender attachment will eventually recover to you the hearts which you had half, if not entirely, lost.


Have no eyes for the weaknesses of your parents ; show forbearance in admonishing your erring brethren, and severity against no one but yourself. Your self-love may also tell you, that you deserve not the reproaches which are sometimes put upon you—Oh ! think, whether you have not given occasion to them, by some impropriety of behaviour. Lay aside the fault—who would un-

mercifully wish to grieve the guiltless ? *Carefully guard against giving an ear to your humours—but exhibit at all times the same serene and friendly mind.*

Do not spoil your heart by self-wilfulness—by acting and speaking just as at one moment or another you may fancy. No—seek rather to obtain a control over yourself—be mistress of your feelings and sensations. In no one do we less pardon the irruption of rough and unbecoming feelings—in no one less, fickleness and change of sentiments, or disposition, than in a well-bred female. No one has less capability of becoming a happy wife herself, and of making others happy, than she who is the 'slave of her fancies, and will give them rule over every thing in her house. .

Learn to work—your diligence from morning to night will be the best example to others. The idler stands not without shame before you ; and the honourable man loves and respects much more highly the hand which is industrious and takes care that order and cleanliness shall make his house the temple of peaceful happiness—than the hand which only excels in the art of dress.

Learn to be economical—even when you live in abundance, be economical ! not to be avaricious, and to amass useless money, but to save superfluities, with the price of which you may be able to benefit suffering families. Man acquires treasure



by his labour—woman by her economy. And a cheerful benefactor to the poor is a pearl in society—an object of the esteem of all right principled and tender-hearted persons.

And lastly, O young woman! you who are a Christian, a daughter of God—*learn to begin, carry on, and finish the work of every day with religious feeling.* A woman without religion is with great justice the object of dislike and scorn to all serious and cultivated persons. A woman, who with her small experience and knowledge, with her poor information, pretends to play the free-thinker, is herself a contradiction, and appears in the eyes of the reasonable, as a silly person, who, without any intrinsic worth, wishes to carry on a vain pretension with assumed wisdom.

Honour and perfect your relations—the tender relation to your God, of which you have been conscious from the days of childhood. Be in religion—in the true devotional practice of religious duties—be willingly the example of your associates and friends. But be so, as in every thing else, without pretension, without affectation, without wishing to make a display of it. That beauty alone is pleasing, which was not designed to please.

Neither your father, nor your mother, nor your betrothed himself, nor even your husband, is the most trusty confidant of the feelings and emotions

of your heart. God only is that confidant. No one else is a lasting friend—the fickle disposition of mankind, fortune, or death, may rob you of many possessions. But God remains to you for ever. He protects you, helps you, and cares for you.

Can you, as Jesus Christ has taught, pray to the Universal Father with purity and childlike confidence? then despond not. You are worthy of yourself and of the love of all good men.

XXIII.

INWARD GOOD, OUTWARD GRACE.

GALATIANS V. 22, 23.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance : against such there is no law."

HOWEVER skilfully a man, in his intercourse with the world, may, partially and at times, disguise himself ; he cannot preserve his disguise towards all who immediately surround him ; he cannot continually appear in his borrowed form : there are moments when he unintentionally forgets himself.

Our mind, be it good or bad, will ever manifest itself in our outward demeanour. Not only does a momentary feeling speak in the blush or paleness of the cheek ; our prevailing humours, in the play of the features ; and the passing thoughts, even in the peculiar expression of the eyes ;—but, how much soever we may have ourselves and our features under command, our whole disposition shows itself in the style and character of our behaviour.

Would you learn the general way of thinking, the goodness or badness, the inclinations and peculiarities of a man who appears to be reserved : only observe the mode of life which he pursues ; the direction of his household, his conduct towards his dependants, his tone to his superiors, the choice of his furniture, of his intimate friends and of his pleasures,—especially the manner in which he makes his wishes known.

A man may easily disguise himself for this or that particular purpose, but not for all the purposes which he might desire to answer. A man may indeed, for one cause or another, in particular instances attempt to appear different from what he is; but he can have no cause to conceal all he thinks or wishes. Hence there is always a visible, a striking connexion between our thoughts and actions. For every man will endeavour so to shape and arrange the world around him, as that it may, in principal matters, correspond with his own views and inward bias.

It is very remarkable that, notwithstanding this, the offender often tries to unite his wicked disposition with all possible external amiableness ; and to give to vice, as it were, a certain semblance pleasing to the eye : whilst the honest man, through singular caprice, absolutely neglects, or even avoids, every thing by which he might make his goodness

of heart and rectitude of mind acceptable in society. The hypocrite understands the method of winning, by flattery and attention, the hearts of those who come in contact with him ; whilst many a well-intentioned person, who in reality designs nothing but what is good, is at the same time rough, passionate, and repulsive—presuming on the justness of his cause. On this account also it is not uncommon to see very despicable persons raised to enviable circumstances and stations, while the most deserving remain, set aside and neglected, in obscurity ; or to see people associate with a man who is amiable as to his exterior, although notorious for his duplicity or objectionable mode of living, while they avoid an estimable person, because he is somewhat harsh, unpleasant, or careless in his demeanour.

How is it then—do, indeed, the beautiful and the charming belong only to the peculiarities of sin—and the morose, the sombre, and the repulsive to the effects of virtue ? Impossible ! It is not thus that Jesus has taught me to recognize the features of Christian virtue. What confusion of things would there be if the offender adorned himself with all the loveliness of a good heart, and the pious adopted the hateful, insufferable index of a corrupted mind ! I fear that a *repulsive* virtue is no *true* virtue. For the Holy Scripture teaches

me to know the appearance of pure piety by very different tokens. The most specious of vices, we are assured, is only a white-washed sepulchre ; and the carnally-minded man only a wolf in sheep's clothing. "*But the fruit of the Spirit,*" says St. Paul, "*is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*" (GAL. v. 22.)

True Christianity is not harsh, offensive, misanthropic, or reserved. How could this accord with that LOVE which is the deepest, purest fountain of all Christian feeling ? Did Jesus flee into the wilderness ? Did he shun all intercourse with sinners ? Did He make Himself a cell in the desert, where men could scarcely ever see Him ? Did He encourage us to do so ? Did He teach us to despise all the delights of life ? No ; He willingly dwelt amongst mankind. He bore their weaknesses with patience ; and even their persecutions and injuries with magnanimity. He mixed with their enjoyments—He was not absent from the cheerful, social circle ; He tasted the sweets of friendship, and distinguished the beloved disciple by the most tender marks of affectionate esteem. He denied not either to others or Himself the proper gratification of the senses. He filled the empty vases with wine at the feast of Cana ; and when, according to oriental custom, His head was to be anointed with costly, fragrant oil, He did not reject the service. No ; it

is impossible that the true Spirit of Christ, and the consciousness of a just cause, can make us harsh and disagreeable to others. They instil into the mind no wrath, no contempt towards those who do not think as we do : they put not a sword into my hand to persecute my fellow-creature, because he holds opinions which do not harmonize with mine. That is not Christian feeling—it is intolerant pride—it is a jaundiced, irrational zeal, which is far removed from godliness ! It is a murderous philanthropy—a love of God, which destroys the work of God ! It is not veneration and anxiety for the holy cause which we have espoused, but an extravagant appreciating and idolizing of our own opinions. The fruit of the Spirit is not hatred, persecution, and rage ; but love, gentleness, and friendship. He who would convert the world by fire and sword ; who would turn men from the error of their ways by imprisonment and public disgrace ; who would make men happy by overwhelming them with grief and sorrow—he that would do so, is a madman, who, with the best intentions, chooses the worst means ; and strangles his brother to free him from a fault which did not hurt a worm.

There is no true piety, no purely honest disposition, where the consciousness of acting rightly produces unkindness and offensive conduct towards our neighbour. You may be an honest, open, up-

right man; but your virtue by no means justifies you in behaving with severity and harshness to others; in using strong terms by which they may be mortified or injured. You have, perhaps, the juster cause, but your pride on that account is unjust both to yourself and to your cause. Do you not know that it often matters far less *what* a man does, than *how* he does it; and that the valuable part of an action often consists less in what is performed, than in the mode in which it is performed? The help which you render to him who has need of it, loses all its merit, often all its fruit, if you give it with unfriendly words and implied reproaches. A small charity rejoices and comforts the sufferer more, if imparted to him in a kind manner, than a considerable sum of money which is thrown to him with offensive austerity—or in a manner humiliating to his feelings. You may, indeed, intend it well; but your inward rectitude by no means excuses your outward unfriendliness, and want of delicacy. At the moment when you flattered yourself that you were acting in a praiseworthy manner, and doing good, you were guilty of a serious failing.

Inward goodness stands not in opposition to external grace; but love, gentleness, friendliness, and patience, are the true product of the Spirit. If you can present to your brother a pleasing fruit in a golden vessel, why should you, out of a strange

caprice, hand it to him on a dirty plate? Internal worth affords us no excuse for despising external qualifications. Your views, your knowledge, may be commendable; but not so is the haughty pride with which you wilfully neglect external propriety, and would compel men to take you even as it pleases you to be. Forget not that a man endowed with many useful qualities, may be a very useless being; if, together with his knowledge, he do not possess sufficient prudence to make it acceptable and efficacious in the proper way. What does that piety avail before God or man, which confines itself to the precincts of a hermitage, and never arrives at a state of profitable activity? What avail all your excellent talents and capabilities, if by morose and unaccountable conduct you make yourself incapable of bringing your talents into action? Why do you assume the disagreeable garb of a faulty mind in your outward appearance, instead of suffering your virtue to be apparent in the amiableness which is proper to it? God indeed looks into your heart—but not man. Thus, as you judge others, so do others judge you, according to what you appear to them to be. If with all your inward excellencies, your character be mistaken, do not complain of it—for you have never sincerely wished it otherwise. Why do you leave it to chance to convince people of your use-

fulness and inward rectitude ? Do we put a light under a bushel ? Who expects to find a noble pearl inclosed in a dirty shell ?

Inward goodness and outward grace are heavenly and earthly sisters, who, notwithstanding their different natures, continually depend upon each other, and should never be disunited. If even the secret sinner borrow the outward grace of virtue, how comes it that the good man forgets it—or even assumes the appearance of being worse than he is ? That this is a failing, and consequently unallowable—no one can doubt. But whence proceeds this not very unusual eccentricity, this blameable conduct, which is so often found in very estimable men ?

Sometimes it is only the effect of early bad education. A youth has been instructed in the necessary and useful parts of his future calling—but he has not been accustomed to the conduct which is becoming in it. He has been taught to understand what is pious, right, and noble ; or his own inclination has led him to it—but he has neglected to pay due attention to what may be proper and required of him in civilized society. Moreover, when we observe men with empty heads or empty hearts, how they devote their whole heart and ability to the trifling concerns of so-called high life—how they make a study of courteousness and flattery,

dress elegantly, trifle elegantly, and—do nothing elegantly—and are thus no more than mere figures, within miserably deficient, but without gaudily adorned :—then the noble mind may well feel an aversion for that which is denominated outward grace. We may, however, go too far in contempt of externals, and make it a custom or principle—forgetting, that much may be valuable in the hands of a wise man, which is ridiculous in the hands of a fool.

For the same reason, the harshness, reserve, and gloomy habits of very pious men, may sometimes have originated in unfortunate experience. It is but too frequently the case, that those who avoid intercourse and intimacy with mankind, have formerly been their most sincere friends. It is peculiar to lively and very talented persons, that they act in every thing without due moderation. There is scarcely any one, subject to the painful feeling of misanthropy, who has not formerly loved his fellow-creatures with heartfelt fervour and self-denial. But deceived in his, perhaps exorbitant, ideas of the worth of men,—mistaken, notwithstanding his good will—recompensed, for all that he has done out of pure love, with neglect and ingratitude—at length he shrinks back affrighted into himself—and fear, disgust, and hatred of mankind take place of his former love towards them. He does

not, therefore, cease to be pious, beneficent, and noble-minded—but he does what is right, from a sense of duty, and as if he did it towards beings who neither have any comprehension of real inward worth, nor are deserving of the kind treatment which virtue demands. But a person who is unhappily of this mode of thinking, does not consider, that as he had before misunderstood mankind, under the influence of his fanciful love, so he now no less mistakes them, in his evil misanthropic temper. He does not consider, that as formerly by his good-natured warmth, he often gave occasion to others to mistake him—so now again, his reserved, morose, and truly or apparently unsympathising conduct is the cause that others again mistake him. Mankind are not so excellent, as in our younger years we are inclined to esteem them; nor so corrupt as individual melancholy experience may afterwards, perhaps, make us disposed to think them. But this is certain, that every man, even apparently the most wicked, has in the depths of his heart, an inclination to good, an insurmountable respect for virtue; and every man, even the wisest, judges others only partially from his own peculiar station in the world, and according to his individual experience. Thus, both the criminal has his good qualities, and the wise man his errors. The unsocial habits, nay often the harshness and

cruelty in which sometimes a man's zeal for virtue displays itself, are the effect of perverted ideas of what is good and right, often the effect of a temper naturally passionate, and at variance with virtue itself. At this day we are astonished at the dreadful errors of past ages, when men threw into prisons or the flames of the funeral pile those who differed from them in religious opinions—when men, from love to God, persecuted their brethren with fire and sword; and, in order to please Heaven, laid waste the Earth. But live there not to-day barbarous, narrow-spirited, partially-minded people enough, who, although called Christians, would be capable of similar abominations in the name of Christ? Live there not to-day, even among supposed enlightened nations, enough people, who, from vehement zeal for what they esteem right, will commit the most crying wrong—who out of desire for civil and religious liberty are the most intolerant of men, or who, out of love to their country, would desolate their native land, if any of its inhabitants held opinions contrary to those which they deem beneficial and patriotic? No;—true virtue never steps forth with the gestures of anger and malignity; there is no love where hatred rages. *Inward goodness is ever united with outward grace*;—even where virtue enters heroically into contest for its rights, it respects the obligations of humanity; and

though it appear undaunted, sacrificing all earthly considerations,—yet is it noble-minded and magnanimous, ever inclined to peace, and opening a path which tends towards it.

Far more commonly, however, is the rough, ill-tempered, pettish, blustering manner of otherwise upright persons,—their selfish and strange habits, their diligent neglect of external grace and amiableness, to be attributed to a petty vanity. Proud of their rectitude, they despise every thing which they call *appearance*. In the consciousness of their own worth, they think that they debase themselves, and somewhat relax their dignity, when they have recourse to the little means, common in social life, of making their inward qualities valued by other men. Out of a haughty pride, they do, indeed, the very reverse of this; and it tickles their vanity, that, with all their contempt for outward propriety and the amiableness which belongs to virtue, they should, nevertheless, be indispensable and esteemed. They are like a rich man who absurdly takes pleasure in going clothed in rags, and yet in being fawned upon by flatterers. Is pride in tatters less pride than that in purple silk? Certainly not; but it is, if possible, more ridiculous. And thus also the self-proud, haughty virtue, which avoids whatever may make it pleasing in the eyes of others, is a strange mixture of qualities, of a

good and a bad heart—of a sense of right and a pride of singularity.

Away with these perversions! Let virtue appear as she is—only as goodness, love, and patience—and she will surely please. He who intends by his outward conduct to have it understood as his opinion, that merit and uprightness have no need of external ornament, often falls through vanity into real and repulsive affectation. Such was not Jesus Christ, the divine example! He was to the world in all external things such as it was necessary he should be, in order to be comprehended by it; without artifice or affectation, simple, true, and clear; making himself neither better nor worse than he really was; at all times honouring and manifesting forbearance, goodness, and love,—and observant of the outward relations of social life, the laws and manners of his countrymen.

Let us therefore be as He was. “*Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.*” (COL. iii. 12.) Such as our heart is, let it shine forth in our actions. If you possess true love and humility—exercise them in all your social intercourse. *Let your inward goodness show itself in outward grace.* Can a mind that loves order and cleanliness be pleased with dirt and confusion in the household; or a truly virtuous

and godly disposition take delight in disdaining and contemning that, which other men demand from them as a duty? No; where with goodness of heart external roughness is combined, and with philanthropy, a mockery of that, which is agreeable to men in communication with them; where rectitude of sentiment unites with passionate heat and anger and stubbornness; where candour degenerates into coarseness; where neglect of outward grace and dignity is nothing more than proud humility, and a mania for distinction; *there* is no *true* goodness of heart, no *genuine* philanthropy, no *pure* integrity, no *unsophisticated* honesty!—*there* is a heart in which many weeds entwine around and choke the springing seeds of goodness; and where into the pure stream of virtue passion pours its troubled and muddy waters.

O Lord, my Judge, Thou knowest that *my* heart, also, is not wholly free from the entanglement of this pernicious weed;—and haughtiness or vanity, —or excessive zeal, often losing itself in injustice, —or forgetfulness of what is becoming in intercourse with my fellow-creatures, has destroyed the good seed which had been sown within me.

My conscience tells me, that I often failed, even when I thought that I was acting well. Thence it happened, that, with all my good will, I could not

effect my beneficial purposes. For I frequently regarded my conduct in outward matters far too little, and supposed that I might give the less attention to demeanour, in proportion as I had right on my side in other things. Thereby, I foolishly robbed my actions, which were really, perhaps, praiseworthy, of the greatest part of their value. Thereby I alienated the affection and confidence of men, while I certainly desired their benefit; thereby I rendered myself incapable of performing all the good, which otherwise would have been possible in my sphere of action. This have I done ! Proud of my heart, my sentiments, my scanty merit, I have lost all credit with my fellow-creatures ; as well as before Thee, most just and holy God ! I sinned at the very moment when I intended to do good.

With penitence I see my folly and my faults ; with thankfulness I perceive, by means of Thy holy word, what is the true way of imitating Thy Son Jesus Christ, my Example and my Guide.

Ah ! how long have I to strive before I approach to that perfection after which I sigh ! How have I always wavered between right and wrong, truth and error, virtue and sin ! O my Heavenly Father, have pity on my weakness ! My will is holy, but my actions are erroneous. Have pity on Thy

who earnestly seeks improvement. Lead me
d by Thy hand to that state of holiness and
vation after which my soul languishes. My
my Father, strengthen me through Thy
!

XXIV.

THE DANGER OF SOCIAL PLEASURES.

PROVERBS iv. 23.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

WE very frequently say : ' Lively youth pursues pleasure, as the object of its chief desire.' It is true. But is this to be praise or censure ? or is it one of those common phrases which mean—just nothing ? I think the latter—for manhood and age are equally striving after pleasures and amusements ; though not indeed after those of youth—because they cannot any longer enjoy them. But, truly, the joys of youth, its plays, its dances, its jokes, its mischief, are often far more innocent than the pleasures of older people—than their cards, their scandal, their ridicule and derision of their neighbours,—and their other ways of passing time—as they are wont to call it.

There are persons who would willingly have music, dancing, social games, and such cheerful amuse-

ments to be regarded as a sin—the same amusements in which they themselves, in their younger days, took great delight. But now they are grown old, they would willingly see the whole of human society become old also. They are wrong—every season of life, like every season of the year, has its peculiar charms.

Even as a Christian, I may participate in all these enjoyments. Why should I not? My Saviour and Teacher, Jesus Christ, during his intercourse with men did by no means exclude himself from their social recreations. He condemned the hypocrite, the pretended devotionalist, who was secretly guilty of various kinds of sin—but He did not censure the cheerful, in the full tide of their enjoyment: He himself encouraged cheerfulness, and supported the harmless mirth, even of the poorest, by teaching them to trust in God. He condemned, it is true, the reveller, the drunkard, the luxurious prodigal and the gambler—but not the happy guests at Cana, among whom, He Himself was numbered, and for whom He filled the pitchers, miraculously, with wine. “*Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice,*”—says St. Paul to the Philippians, (iv. 4.)

And yet I dare not conceal from myself, that even the most innocent pleasures ought to be enjoyed with the greatest caution. For I have often

painfully found, by my own experience, that much pleasure has become the source of long and deep disgust, which was far greater than the shortlived gaiety that occasioned it. I enjoy many pleasures indeed, with a certain degree of timidity, or even anxiety—for I have often found, in the course of my life, that the more delightfully I have passed a day, the darker was the shade which usually succeeded.

I must, as a Christian—and will, like a Christian—consider well the pleasure which I allow myself. The fruit of this religious reflection is, perhaps, my best security against being soon brought into a situation, in which I have to repent of an indulgence, or of the way in which I participated in it—it will teach me to avoid the serpent, which sometimes lies concealed beneath the roses of festivity.

I see, indeed, generally, that every pleasure may become prejudicial, when it is indulged to excess. I have long known this—but it is far more difficult to know exactly where to trace the boundary line of what is permitted in matters of pleasure; and what I must attend to, in order that I may not push my gratifications beyond their proper limits. Such an error is nowhere more readily committed than in social intercourse and pleasures. For there one man stimulates another by flattering inducements and example. There many passions are un-

expectedly called into action, and many inclinations, before asleep, are suddenly awaked. There the delight we take in what is passing, soon draws us beyond the bounds of strict propriety—and sometimes a false sense of honour, or a still worse motive. We soon cease to be our own masters, or are afraid, on account of others, to remain so, even when we have it in our power.

Herein lies the danger of all social pleasures, that the sense of what is good, is blunted ; enjoyment consists no longer in the feelings of the heart, but in the gratification of a violent desire, which exercises a dominion over our whole mind. But "*out of the heart are the issues of life :*" the mere gratification of the external senses is always more or less attended by an unpleasant sensation in the heart, and is fatal to genuine joy. Therefore, if any one feel himself at a particular time perfectly happy, he is accustomed to say : ' I am thoroughly happy—happy at the very bottom of my heart.' The mere satisfying of our desires for outward things, is not inward joy.

The sacred writings, therefore, give us a golden rule to be followed in all circumstances—and especially in the enjoyment of pleasure : "*Keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life.*" (PROV. iv. 23.) This beautiful maxim will I impress upon my memory :—the hour will

assuredly arrive, when I shall have need to recall it to my mind ; when it will strengthen my sense of duty—and by making me master of myself, spare me disgust, care, grief, repentance, and many tears.

Keep your heart with all diligence in mixing with social pleasures. However innocent the offered amusements may appear to be, or really are, we must approach them with still greater caution, than manifest dangers. We do not easily deceive ourselves with regard to an obvious cause of vexation or unhappiness ; but much more frequently concerning that which we regard only as an excitement to pleasure.

Keep your heart with all diligence—for pleasure in itself may be quite innocent, but may become guilty and blameable through the corruption of the heart. From the heart proceed “the issues of life,” and on the heart depends the value of external things. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures justly say : “*To the pure all things are pure.*”

An open occasion of offence or injury alarms us and makes us cautious—on the other hand, we resign ourselves to pleasure unsuspiciously. The danger is therefore greater. A man does not give himself pleasure, but gives himself up to pleasure. Indulgence in any kind of amusement is like the exhilaration of wine, which at first pleasantly affects the palate—then heightens the tone of the nerves

—produces conviviality and forgetfulness of care—but soon leads also to a forgetfulness of what is proper and becoming; to the loss of all sense of honour and of innocence—to brutal unconsciousness, and often to dreadful crimes. Such is joy! Therefore, in all participation of social pleasures keep your heart with diligence, for “out of the heart are the issues of life”—and the value of its joys.

It is one of man's great errors, and a dangerous one, to think that the object of his life, of all his cares, his labour, and his business, is to be able to give himself a few days of sensual enjoyment; or to consider that person supremely happy who is rich enough to procure all the luxuries after which his heart may long. This false imagination frequently prevails, not only in ordinary men, who labour and toil all the week, with the sweat of their brow, in order that they may be able to pay with their earnings, for the festivities of one holiday. No—it is prevalent also among the rich and great. They know not how to amass wealth enough, and often withhold it from the needy, only that they may revel in amusements. These are the objects of their life. They foolishly imagine that he who has enjoyed most worldly pleasure, has lived the longest.

Happiness is certainly the object of sublunary life; but a man is to be pitied, who knows no other

happiness than that which is commonly produced by the amusements of the world. No :—*from the heart* must the true enjoyment of life and happiness proceed ! He who takes no pleasure in his weekly business, in the labours of his calling,—who has no delight in domestic occupations and acts of humanity,—he must necessarily be an unhappy man during the greatest part of his existence. We are not to work, in order that we may obtain amusements ; but we should enjoy amusement to strengthen us for work. He who places an excessive value on social pleasures, is subject to all the dangers of them ; and is lost to true joy and genuine happiness.

The pursuit after outward pleasure makes us poor in inward joy. One consequence of the prevailing tendency to dissipation is, that we forget nobler objects ; regard the labours of our calling as a burden, and the business of our state as a secondary concern. The eye of the unhappy man is always directed towards the day of pleasure and intoxication. But how often does it happen, that, at last, even this does not answer his expectations !

Yet, wonder not how it comes to pass that there are so many discontented and unhappy people in the world. It arises from this—that very few of those who live, understand the art of living—that they wish to give satisfaction to the heart ; whereas,

the enjoyment of life must proceed from the heart. Their desire for social pleasures is grown into a passion—in the gratifying of which they forget themselves and their higher duties.

Hence it arises, that such men set an exorbitant value upon those qualities which please in society, and underrate the silent modest virtues of the heart—and true unpretending merit. They do not live for their own sake, but always for the sake of others. A jest, a sally of wit, is to them of more worth than the most important truth, or the most useful knowledge. A wicked, refined mocker, who knows how to amuse a party, is with them a far more meritorious man than the most upright, than the most active philanthropist, who does not understand the art of amusement. Their chief attention is directed to exterior grace, to elegance of dress, to a captivating style of speech and carriage. It does not strike them, that a noble cast of mind, a strong religious sense, or the deserving well of our fellow-citizens, our country, and mankind, can be more honourable than the gift of companionableness, of pleasing, and of joking. Men of this kind lose at last all that is dignified in human nature ; become amusing figures, affected, empty beings, which are nothing in themselves, but like musical instruments, serve for entertainment, if any one knows how to play upon them. They are tolerated

by intelligent persons ; but, properly speaking, never esteemed except by people of their own kind.

The endeavour to shine in company has but too often become the means of corrupting good men, whose vanity, intoxicated by passing applause, stifled in the end all better feelings. We see fathers who on this account neglect the calling in which they once took great delight ; who desert their wives and children, once most dear to their affection ; who destroy their public credit and their private fortune—only to take the lead in social intercourse and pleasures. Through this desire to shine in society, we see females, formerly estimable, bring much misfortune on their families. They carry with them pleasure and vivacity into the circle of their friends—but not unfrequently a morose and quarrelsome disposition into their own domestic circle. Having the gift of conversation, they neglect the management of their household ; they sacrifice to this passion the care of their uneducated children, the duties of domestic economy—nay, often even the obligations of conjugal fidelity. This intemperate inclination for social pleasures, plunges well-educated youth, by degrees, into the mire of the lowest debauchery ; and deprives amiable young women of the foundation of honour, modesty, innocence, and the capability of enjoying

in future the happiness of a calm, unpretending, domestic life.

It belongs also to the dangers of social pleasures, that we are not only induced to put an exorbitant value upon them, by which better and more weighty things fall into oblivion—but also that we acquire a prejudicial propensity to form numerous acquaintances. This soon grows into a passion for spending our time amongst new associates. We enjoy change for its own sake : it is also flattering to our vanity to make ourselves constantly of importance to others ; and to be repeatedly admired for what we have often done or said. This inordinate desire for new acquaintances takes away all sense of the real advantages which social life is calculated to afford. The man becomes frivolous in the choice of his connexions, and incapable of forming lasting friendships. He is like a person on a perpetual journey. Many acquaintances give at last easy, polished manners ; but banish all cordial feelings : they lead us into a varied circle, but to no deeper knowledge of mankind. They serve for transient intercourse, but render unavoidable a great loss of time. Life is so short, that if we wish to make the best use of it, we must attend only to a few things on our passage through it. He who would learn all, learns nothing perfectly.

It is not intercourse with the many, but intercourse with the good, which improves a man.

I know that offence is often taken, and that by truly pious people—at the way in which we generally entertain ourselves in society ; and they remark the danger of social pleasures in the very choice which is made of them. They avoid, for instance, going to public theatres—even if the most instructive masterpieces of the great poets are represented by the best performers. Their dislike arises, for the most part, from a prejudice which was excited against all theatrical exhibitions in times and placès, in which the vulgar rabble indulged in low buffoonery. They abstain from attending convivial entertainments in which wine, and singing, and pleasantry, raise the mind to a livelier tone than usual. Their dislike generally springs from an exaggerated anxiety lest mirth should overstep the slight barrier of morality ; or from an extravagant idea that hilarity is not proper for a Christian. They avoid being present at the sprightly dances of youth, in which art and nature, and grace and joy, playfully contend. Their dislike usually arises from an overstrained notion of morality, or an exaggerated and melancholy opinion of the total corruption of mankind. They object to playing at cards, even for the most trifling stake—in which

the change of luck, the acute plan, or the correct calculation of chances cheers and diverts the mind after the pressure of more severe studies, or more weighty business. Their dislike proceeds from the too well-founded conviction that play easily excites ignoble passions, or causes us to forget more important things.

Yet certainly I should be wrong in condemning the means of social intercourse, which are innocent in themselves, and which have served for the temporary recreation of many righteous, many pious men. To drink wine is no sin ; though it is one to be a drunkard :—it is no sin to play a social game, but it is so to be a gamester. The use of things in themselves innocent is not hurtful ; but greatly injurious is the abuse of them. Now, abuse arises from the heart, “ *Therefore keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*” It is “ *that which cometh out of the man that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts,*” and many attendant vices.

Social pleasures have their dangers. They are dangerous, because their sweetness too easily seduces us to love them with intemperance, and to make them the chief object of our lives and actions. But they are only dangerous to him, who, in the enjoyment of them does not know how to guard

his heart. He who once forgets to do so, has, for his punishment, to repent when it is too late,—the destruction of his health,—often the loss of his property, and sometimes the horrors of desperation.

Would you enjoy social pleasures without ever experiencing their dangers? Would you live in the spirit of Jesus—cheerfully with the cheerful, and yet withal a godly life? Would you, in mere common prudence, pluck the flowers of life without tearing your hand with their thorns?—Go then: guard your own heart!

Social pleasures must not become to a good man, who seeks to be permanently happy, either a habit or a necessity. *He must be able to do without them, without any diminution of his happiness.* His house, his family, the labours of his calling, and his daily duties, must constitute his happiness—without his needing the assistance of others. He must know how to embellish his quiet existence. But if he do not know how, then is he indeed an unhappy man. Has any kind of social pleasure become essential to him? then is he subject to all its dangers and disadvantages. Let him save himself, if he yet can do so. Let him combat the passion while he has power, ere it imperceptibly drag him to his ruin. Pleasure is to be regarded only as a medicine, not as food.

Avoid, above all other kinds of social pleasures,

those which most powerfully attract you—those of which you forebode that they may generate a passion in your bosom—those concerning which you have already had experience that they possess the power to mislead you into forgetfulness of your duties. They are the most dangerous to you. Does play lead you to anger, to desire of gain, to exultation in another's loss, or to envy?—avoid it! That is the weak side of your heart. Be worthy of yourself, and be always your own master! Have you ever forgotten yourself in drinking—in the intemperate enjoyment of wine?—henceforward be more temperate; and do not forfeit your mental dignity, your health, and the repose of your life for a transitory gratification of your palate, or your nerves! Does the dance ever awake in you improper inclinations, which you would be ashamed of acknowledging before those who are worthy of your esteem?—shun the dance, especially any excess of it! “*Keep thy heart diligently, for out of it are the issues of life.*”

By no means despise the enjoyments of society; but you must so arrange your private life, and know how to adorn it by a thousand sweet and simple pleasures, that every enjoyment out of the house shall be subordinate to that peaceful happiness which you find in the labours of your calling, in your intercourse with your friends, and in the

performance of acts of beneficence towards both acquaintances and strangers. Social pleasures must only serve to render the superiority of solitary domestic enjoyments the more conspicuous. He who is rich enough in inward happiness, seeks and pursues not modes of entertainment which, on the slightest indiscretion, inevitably bring their dangers with them.

O Gracious God ! Thou source of happiness ! I know that the pleasure most threatens my happiness, which most appears to promise it. Not that Thou hast permitted so much evil in the world, that pleasure must needs be hurtful. No ;—our heart itself first creates the evil which is found abroad.

My immortal, pure spirit is alone capable of pure, everlasting joys—to these shall my highest efforts be directed. I shall obtain them by means of moderation, justice, contentment, and philanthropy. But the joys of sense, though I will not despise them—partake of the instability of every thing belonging to sense. He who would enjoy all that earthly pleasures can impart, remains after all unsatisfied. Excessive enjoyment ends always in disgust. For we find afterwards that the whole round of pleasures is not worth the troubling of our life. Therefore, O heavenly Father, will I above all things strive after the pure, peaceful, and lasting joys which are promised to such a virtuous and

only course of life, as is acceptable in Thy sight :
and with wise moderation will I enjoy the pleasures
which my intercourse with mankind is capable of
fording. They shall never have dominion in my
heart—in that heart which is consecrated to Thee.
amen.

XXV.

ON INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE.

LUKE ii. 52.

“ And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

THE history of the youth of Jesus is almost entirely unknown to us. How instructive would it be, if it had been preserved ! It is only of the last three years of the Divine Teacher of the Word, that we have more particular accounts. They, indeed, were more important to all mankind ; they constituted the period of His life, which was passed openly in the sight of the people ; and could be recorded even by eye-witnesses. But how and where was Jesus passing the long space of thirty years before ? Even the diversions of this holy child would have deeply interested me ; and the employments of the divine youth have afforded edification to my heart and spirit. How much do I imagine, from the single trait which the Evangelist has related of Him when twelve years old ; when His parents had lost

Him in Jerusalem, and after a long search, found **Him** in the Temple—where he sat listening to the **Doctors**, and asking them questions, with a desire to obtain wisdom and information, and to enrich **Himself** with sacred learning. He had already shewn by His answers, that he had silently meditated with **Himself** on the sublime truths, concerning which **He** now communed with the Pharisees and Lawyers. They were astonished at the superior understanding of the extraordinary child.

But from that time up to His entrance into public life, the Evangelical History is silent respecting His words and actions. The Gospel narrative goes no further than to describe this whole series of years in the few but expressive words: “*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*” (LUKE ii. 52.)

If the life of Jesus Christ is to be the example and pattern of our lives, who would not wish that something similar might be said of us, and of every one? The increase of wisdom, that is, of the knowledge of what is good and useful, and the consequent increase of true piety, it is every person's first duty to promote: together with it increases also the favour which we enjoy with God and man.

The Religion of Jesus is, indeed, in itself, no learned science; but the power of God to save

sinners:—it is not given merely for enlightened men and sages; but it is simple and clear, so that it may be understood by the uninstructed, and even by the child whose mind is in some degree matured. It does not demand that we should employ ourselves entirely in the acquisition of knowledge and learning; but it admonishes us strictly, that every one should attend to the station and calling in which Providence has placed him. Yet this religion considers as a main duty—advancement in the knowledge of all that is true and useful, the clearing and freeing of our understandings from error and prejudice, the forming and strengthening of our immortal spirit. For this, God gave us the different endowments of the spirit, namely, reason, understanding, imagination and memory—in order that these talents should be turned to profit, and not be buried. “*No man, when he hath lighted a candle,*” saith Jesus, “*putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel.*” (LUKE xi. 33.) Therefore adds St. Paul to his disciples, “*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*” (PHIL. iv. 8.) *For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are*

clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."
(Rom. i. 20.)

We spend the greatest part of our time in acquiring skill and ability of various kinds, for the purposes of our body—in learning handicrafts, arts, and other business, by which we may earn our bread;—we do not think it too troublesome to study, even with great pains, things which in no way contribute to our profit, but merely to our amusement. If now we bestow so much care on our mortal body, why should we not also be mindful of the nourishment of our soul—which is to exist in a state of immortality? Is not the soul more noble, more precious, than the body?

No; in many of our every-day persons, the body is more noble than the spirit. They can be zealous enough in the decorating of their body; and spend many valuable hours in the adorning of it with elegant clothing; know well enough how to please by appearance, grace, and courtesy; are skilful enough in gaining the admiration of the ball-room by their activity; and are constantly endeavouring to appear to be more than they really are. But the immortal soul of these agile, ornamented, agreeable, applause-seeking beings, is poor, and empty, and neglected.

It is not, however, the body which raises us above

the beasts—*that* we have in common with them—but it is the soul. Not with reference to the body, is it said of us, that we are created by God in His own image—but with reference to the soul—for God is no corporeal Being. It is, therefore, the first duty of man, that by the improvement of his soul and all its excellent qualities—by the seeking of what is pure, right, and useful—he should raise himself above the beasts, and maintain his inherited, higher dignity. So is it a sin, if he grow wild through ignorance, or become rude, superstitious and irrational—if he know no more than how he may agreeably sustain his body, clothe it ornamentally, and lodge it conveniently—if he know nothing of that precious wisdom which makes man a more exalted being; and seek for no acquaintance with God and divine things.

It is not by any means necessary that we should be omniscient: yet whatever station and calling a man may have in this world, he finds in it sufficient need to perfect the gifts with which his spirit is endowed. Every thing which he does, and undertakes, leads him to reflection and further search; but he must take care that the daily habits of his business do not blunt his faculties. He may avoid this danger, if he say to himself, when any thing happens to him unexpectedly: ‘whence does this arise?—how can the cause be fathomed?’

We must not suffer ourselves to be turned aside from our purpose, by the shallow remark : ‘ but of what use is it to me, even if I do know it ? ’ All knowledge of the truth is useful, even when we do not by its means increase our skill in mere worldly matters. How much have you learnt, as a child, of which you have never yet seen the use, and still it may hereafter by chance avail you ! How much, through the ordering of Divine Providence, have you been obliged to remark, to see, to hear, even from early youth, which happened not in vain ; but first made you—that is, your soul—what you now are ! And if the search after truth should at last afford you no immediate external profit,—even if your meditations and research remain without their expected fruit,—yet has the bare exercise of the spirit been of the greatest advantage to you. Your powers of thought and judgment are augmented ; —for all powers are strengthened by exercise, as they become weaker by want of use.

Your appointed station and employment supply you with occasion enough for thought and enquiry. It is not necessary that you should seek objects which lie entirely out of your sphere of action ; —nay, it is oftentimes extremely prejudicial to neglect our calling, and give ourselves up to other things. It is, however, always an actual neglect of our calling, when we do not direct the increase

of our knowledge to the improvement of the condition and circumstances in which we find ourselves placed by the hand of God. We thereby dissipate our powers, and divide our attention. It is also very seldom the love of wisdom which induces man to occupy himself, in preference, with things and knowledge which lie out of the circle of his calling ; but much oftener, an inclination to boasting, or a secret pride, which renders him discontented with his low station in public life, and desirous of acting a more conspicuous part. He who seeks wisdom in order to lay up food for vanity, finds it not ; for he is on the wrong road. On him the favour of God smiles not ; he earns, among intelligent men, instead of the applause which he covets and expects, only derision and contempt.

Therefore be contented with your calling, even if it do not entirely suit your inclination ; or even if you should have been obliged to follow it against your will. But make it respectable by the manner in which you perform its duties—and fulfil them in the utmost perfection of which they are capable ; for this extends your knowledge, and with it your means of livelihood, if they be too limited and too little lucrative for your wants. Justly does he meet with contempt from his fellow-citizens, and he must despise himself, who is not qualified to fill

the situation in which he is placed—whether he be a labourer or an artificer, a teacher or a priest, a civil or a military servant of the state. He is of little use to his family, his country, and mankind. His life is for the most part spent uselessly. With diligence and increased knowledge of his business he might have been beneficial to the world, whether he was a day-labourer or a general—whether he followed the plough, or sat on the seat of judgment. Through ignorance and incapacity he rather becomes hurtful to the commonweal; and his deeds and undertakings become sins—in so far as he is himself guilty of his ignorance, and has pressed or allowed himself to be put into an office for which he had no competent knowledge or experience.

This is the common fault of men, that in the choice of their calling, or the acceptance of employment, they consult less their capacity and talents, than their avarice and ambition. Hence they forget that sacred duty which they owe to God and man:—they obviously betray the interest of their fellow-citizens, when they give themselves out for more than they really are, and at their entering on an employment, promise more than, in consequence of their incapacity, they are in a condition to perform. Through their want of ability and knowledge, they but too often run the risk, without thinking of it, of lending a helping hand to the

cause of evil, and of hindering good which better heads might effect. For alas! ostentatious conceit often accompanies narrowness of spirit; as, on the other hand, modesty is the fruit of true knowledge. And how can we expect excellence from him, who is shameless enough to fill a place of which neither his knowledge, nor his capability, nor his mode of thinking, renders him worthy. If he had committed no other offence against God, his country, his superiors, and fellow-citizens, than that he supplanted a more worthy person, or hindered him from being useful in the place he himself now occupies—this were offence enough, and an offence of which he will one day have to render an account.

If it be said that growth in knowledge and wisdom should always have reference to the business of our calling, it is not thereby meant that the extension of knowledge should only be directed to procuring a more ample income. Man was not created to be nothing else than a day labourer, a manufacturer, an artist, a scholar, or a civil officer. He lives not merely for public functions. He is a higher being, who outlives his vocation upon earth. Heaven is as near to him as the earth; and godliness is as indispensable to him as food. We must introduce godliness into our earthly occupation; but to be able to do this, we should necessarily endeavour to grow in wisdom, in the knowledge of

divine things. The Church—the religious instruction which we receive in youth, and which the heralds of Jesus set forth in the explanation of the Divine Word—lays the first simple foundation in our hearts. But this is not enough. From ourselves must be the lively, the vigorous efforts to approach ever nearer and nearer to God—to perceive ever more deeply His Majesty and dominion. Ah! truly—no book can describe, no mouth of man can express how sublime, how mighty, how wise, how good is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. No one can declare it so distinctly, so worthily, as God Himself in His own works.

This is certified to us by the declaration of the Holy Scripture, that “*the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal power and godhead.*” (Rom. i. 20.) Men in the early times, soon after their creation, perhaps knew less of works of art, of instruments, of institutions, and comforts of life, than we do,—but more of God, and the wonders of his might. They were acquainted with the properties of plants, of stones, of fountains, of various animals, and still better, with the structure of the heavens, the perpetual regular motions of the stars, and their wondrous order. God spoke to them from all things; and they spoke in all of God. This is no

longer the case amongst ourselves. We are degenerate. We are become wiser in whatever is earthly, but more ignorant of that which is divine.

We must, therefore, rise again to our pristine dignity, and increase in the knowledge of the most glorious of Beings. The book of nature is still laid open before us,—the works of God still stand in their ancient majesty, and in unalterable glory, before our eyes.

We speak, indeed, sometimes of the beauties of nature, but have only very vague ideas respecting them; and think, at most, of the charms of some one landscape. We speak of the pleasures of nature, and the happiness which is spread over her bosom: but we do not go beyond a walk,—we are astonished and delighted with the country around us, and seldom know what we are to consider further, on such occasions, than the mere objects of our senses. This poverty of thought is a melancholy evidence of our want of knowledge.

It is impossible that you should make yourself acquainted with the qualities and wonderful order of *all* the works of nature, or *thoroughly* observe and investigate the course and connexions of the heavenly bodies. The life of more than one man would not attain to this. But that which is already told, and shewn by the uninterrupted researches of past centuries,—that learn to appropriate to

yourself. Then will you first duly admire the works of God,—then will you first conceive becoming and sublime ideas of the greatness of the Lord, when the scales of ignorance have fallen from your blinded eyes. Choose a well-informed friend, and let yourself be instructed by him ; or turn to an experienced person, who will recommend to you some book suited to your previous knowledge, and your abilities, in which you may be led to the right consideration of nature, in all its parts. A leisure hour may be found for every thing that is good. How many minutes do you spend in the indulgence of your senses ?—will you not willingly devote a portion of your time to the infinitely sweeter enjoyments of your soul ?

But all knowledge of divine things is vain, if it do not inspire a godly disposition, and do not animate us to fulfil our duty towards God and our fellow-Christians. The love of the eternal Father to his creatures must stream in upon our hearts from the fountains of his works. That is the right growth in wisdom, through which we have "*favour with God and man*"—when we make advances in our knowledge of the divine will. For this opportunities are not wanting—the reading of edifying writings, and the hearing of the Divine Word in church, clear the understanding with regard to what you have to do in order to become a more

exalted and worthy man. Think not that you already know all this better than we can tell you. No ; in the business and press of daily life, in the throng of men and cares, many ideas which were once very lively and clear, gradually become darkened ; much that might be salutary to us at proper moments, is forgotten. It is necessary that we should again awaken what has fallen asleep, that we should refresh what is dying away within us. And if we dedicate our whole life to wisdom and knowledge—can we ever become perfect in them ? Ah ! the deeper we press forward into the shoreless ocean of the divine universe, the more and more does it expand before us. At last all our wisdom is defective !

But I am not born merely for the short period of this transitory life. O Thou Eternal Father—hast Thou called *me* also to eternity ? What I have begun here, I shall there be able to continue ; there shall I view Thee in still clearer light ; there find the holy mystery expounded, at which I can now only marvel in dumb surprise. Ah ! how different will every thing appear, when Thy mercy makes me worthy of a higher station than any I have seen or expected here below. O my Creator, my Father, before whom I sink down in adoration and reverential silence, when I think of Thy greatness—how will it be with me when Thy hand

draws away the veil from a more beautiful world!
Father in Heaven, grant me Thy mercy, that I
may increase in wisdom, and prepare myself for
that awful moment which awaits me yonder!
O hear my supplications, my Creator, my Father!
Amen.

XXVI.

STEPS IN CREATION.

PSALM CIV. 1—5.

*“Bless the Lord, O my soul, O Lord my God, Thou art very great ;
Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest
Thyself with light as with a garment ; who stretchest out the
heavens like a curtain. Who layeth the beams of his chambers
in the waters ; who maketh the clouds his chariot ; who walketh
upon the wings of the wind : who maketh his angels spirits ; his
ministers a flaming fire. Who laid the foundations of the earth,
that it should not be removed for ever.”*

THE divine economy of nature has often filled my soul with indescribable astonishment and rapture—and I am frequently carried back to the consideration of it. When I look upon the immense universe as the house of God, my heavenly Father ; when, incapable as I am of measuring the Infinite by the utmost grasp of mind, I make only the least part of the wonderful creation the subject of my scrutiny ;—when in that smallest part of the things formed and ordained by God, I perceive still the same perfection and infinity as are displayed in the

vast system of the whole created universe ;—then my soul trembles with a silent delight which no language can express,—then I feel myself, as it were, absorbed in the contemplation of my God. I am surrounded by heavenly revelations,—a tear of rapture fills my eye,—I would pray, but I am too much affected, and cannot pray ;—my tears are an offering of praise to my Creator.

Many weak mortals, indeed, have a desire to witness extraordinary things, and expect signs from heaven. Short-sighted man ! what your hand touches is wonderful ; and you perceive it not ;—your foot travels through the dust,—but it steps on worlds which you perceive not ;—you see astonishing sights with your organic eyes, but they remain dark to your mental vision.

Have you a worthy perception of the omnipotence, of the wisdom, of the greatness, of your Creator ? Well, then,—remember that in this house of the Divinity,—in this eternal palace of the universe,—nothing is too small, too trifling, to be the object of admiration. What are the riches and glories of a king, at the view of whose stately habitation you stand bewildered with astonishment,—where marble saloons, and golden ornaments,—where tapestry and pictures enchant your sight ? It is only dust collected from like inanimate dust, and compounded by skilful hands.

Infinitely greater than any mortal king is the Lord of all worlds ; and infinitely richer is the universe, from whence the omnipresent majesty of God shines forth upon thee.

There is nothing in this immeasurable palace, too small or too trifling, every thing has its destination,—all things in it stand in eternal connexion with one another. The world would hang as well by a spider's web, as by that force which holds suns, revolving stars, and comets, in their orbit.

You set your foot on a common-looking pebble, which lies on the shore of the neighbouring water. It was once a part of a rock or mountain. Floods washed it hither. It crumbles in the air, and becomes earth. A growing plant attracts some of its component parts ; and animals are nourished by the plant. That stone, therefore, lies not there in vain,—it had its destination.

A fisherman found on the sea-shore the golden coloured amber ; of this, vanity made an ornament ;—the sage discovered in it a secret power ; and by a further series of experiments, it was demonstrated, that the power of this stone is allied to that which produces the vivid lightning, and the rolling thunder.

From the cloudy skies of winter fall thousands of flakes of snow. Under the magnifying glass,

each of these snow-flakes appears like a star with a hundred little, glittering, feathery points, formed with such tenderness and beauty, that no human skill can imitate this same silvery heaven-dropped star. It falls on your hand,—the exquisite crystals of ice are melted by the warmth. Instead of the star, you have a light drop of dew,—the moisture of which evaporates; the water which has disappeared in vapour, mounts upward; and the fallen silvery star of snow returns in an aerial form to its heavenly fountain. It has now fulfilled its destination,—it has attracted your attention to the divine world of wonders; whilst millions of other flakes spread a warm covering over the surface of the earth, to screen the seeds of the husbandman, and the gardener's plants, from the destructive frost.

When Jehovah spake the omnipotent word :
'*Let the universe be !*' and the universe was,—and moved, glittering and splendid in imperishable magnificence, nothing was then created which was in vain; even the worm in the grass had its destination, and the pollen of the flower received a divine appointment. All in this endless creation is for the sake of each single being; and that single being must be there for the sake of the incalculable whole. Throughout the entire union of created things, there exists an universal intimate

relationship ; and the most distant stands in general harmony with the nearest,—the highest with the lowest. Thou, also, O my soul, art a part of this splendid empire, founded in infinite wisdom ! *Every thing exists for thee,—and thou also for the whole !* I see, in the long, immeasurable chain of created things, an astonishing diversity, and a continual progress from imperfect to better, from better to more perfect, from more perfect to most perfect. This chain includes all beings ; and the most remote hang as links upon it. It rests upon the varied surface of the globe,—passes through the depths of the sea,—sinks into the bowels of the earth ;—it proceeds upwards through the air and clouds,—pierces the unlimited expanse of heaven,—and disappears from our sight, in boundless distance, from which, as yet, only single links sparkle down upon us as faintly twinkling stars.

This is the true *heavenly ladder of creation*, in which perfection increases from step to step,—from the dust which flies about our feet, to the seraph, who wings his way through a glorified eternity.

And these steps,—so lowly and poor is man, that his speech cannot express their number ! We know not yet all the genera of plants which grow upon the earth, and yet we know already more than twenty thousand species,—therefore twenty

thousand steps in the ladder of creation. And among these plants there is, perhaps, no one which does not harbour one or more kinds of animals. Animals, often small, even to invisibility, dwell on them,—and themselves, again, serve as nourishment to others. They are so many little worlds, which include other little worlds within them.

An empire of mysterious power, whose operations we perceive with astonishment, connects the elements of every thing terrestrial. Thus arise beings and beings. They moulder, they fade, they die, they disappear, and their constituent parts pass as elements into new combinations and new forms. Could an eye, enlightened, contemplate the obscure dominion of those powers which work according to established laws, the veil would be withdrawn from an entirely new world—the whole of nature would then become as it were transparent, and would no longer conceal from us any of its secrets. Then should we see how, in the dark bowels of the earth, the metals are strangely generated—there by what magic the rose decks herself with the loveliest tints of red.

Ye heavenly spirits, beings of a higher race, who are exalted above us, as we are raised above the worm, which is born in the morning and dies at even, and knows nothing of old age—heavenly spirits! perhaps ye see clearly and distinctly that

which is unfathomable, and yet lies in obscurity to us! O ye happy beings—ye are the witnesses of creation, and beams of light play around you, whilst we wander in the maze of an interminable riddle which no mortal has capacity to solve. Ye behold God, the Eternal Father, clearer than we—ye dwell in the refulgence of His wonders.

Rocks, earth, the various metals and salts, are to our eyes only crude materials without life, without organs for their own increase or perfecting. Are they then the lowest links of the chain of all that is created? And yet what glory is there even in them! Does not the power of gold and silver subdue even the heart of man? How the solid diamond glitters,—how superbly shines the red light of the brilliant ruby!

We know already many thousand kinds of stones, and yet we know not all. They appear in every form, and in them every colour is displayed. The regular formation of crystals delights our eyes,—no earthly artist can cut so accurately, and so elegantly, as nature has formed these stones.

Many fossils are constructed, like herbs, of leaves tenderly put together,—the asbestos is composed of long thin filaments, which we may separate from one another, and spin and weave into cloth of stone. Other minerals grow like fine glittering hair; and many noble metals spread their branches

between the fissures of the rocks, like trees with boughs and foliage ; others resembling delicate mosses and creeping lichens.*

Here the mineral kingdom forms the gradual transition to the vegetable world, which is peopled with a countless variety of grasses, stalks, flowers, herbs, shrubs, bushes, and trees. A sensible gradation of still greater and greater perfection exists between the truffle, which, like a lump of earth, without root or branch, swells beneath the ground—and the rose, the queen of the garden; or between the mushroom and fungus, which shoots up in a single night—and the twining oak, which grows for centuries; or the Banian tree of Asia, which lives a thousand years, and under the shade of which a whole valley is obscured !

The plants of a nobler kind approach, in their functions, to the animal,—springing from the seed, as the animal from its egg : they imbibe their nutriment from the earth, and their root serves them for a mouth. Like the blood in animals, saps of different kinds ascend and descend in their circulating vessels. The male and female plants are distinguished from each other. They respire like animals ; and die without nourishment, or in an excess of heat or cold.

Thus it would almost seem, as if plants were only animals firmly fixed, and rooted in the ground,

and animals only plants wandering at their will. Many plants have an apparent sleep, which they proclaim in the evening at sunset, by the folding of their tender leaves ; others awake and first unfold themselves at night. The timid sensitive plant exhibits properties, the effects of which are similar to those of animal feeling. If touched, it folds its leaves together, and draws in its branches.

Here is the evanescent boundary, where the vegetable and animal kingdoms abut on one another. The fine red coral is found in the figure of a shrub, at the bottom of the sea ; but it contains a naked worm, which produces this stony web, and lives and nourishes itself with its peculiar food. Entire and large islands in the midst of the ocean, have sprung from coral-beds, from these edifices of weak unsightly worms ; and now bear woods and villages on their surface.

The Polypus in the water, is like a thread-formed slimy plant, with boughs and branches—if cut, new boughs and branches grow. But the little worm swimming through the water, approaches this curious seeming plant—immediately all the boughs and branches twine themselves around it,—carry it to the upper part of the central stalk, where an opening expands to swallow the prey, and extract nourishment from its substance.

In the case of the transition from the most per-

fect plant to the most imperfect animal, which has sense and locomotion, the gradual tendency to perfection proceeds imperceptibly through the whole chain of the animal world,—from the simple coral to the shell-fish,—from the shell-fish to the insect and reptile,—from the order of snakes to the water-eel, and the wonders of the sea,—through the legions of fishes to the sea-lion, and the flying-fish, which suspends itself in air. The birds, which instead of scales have feathers—and instead of fins, wings for their ornament and use, soar through the region of the clouds. But amongst these flying animals, the bat with his hairy coat and leathern wings is allied to four-footed creatures :—the tall ostrich of the desert rather runs than flies, for his pinions only lighten the labour of his feet.

Four-footed animals approach in a thousand various gradations to the human form ; and the ape reaches a great similitude to man.

But man himself, the highest link in the terrestrial chain of beings, walks through the world erect—his eye looks up to heaven—he has dominion over the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. He brings down the eagle from the air, and draws up fish from the depths of the sea. A blind, dark instinct does not guide him,—but an all-illuminating reason is his endowment. He has free thought, and the gift of speech. By his spirit he raises him-

self far above his own level—the bright sparks of Divine Revelation beam into his soul—man alone, here below, has *knowledge of a God*. He raises his mind to the Almighty, sinks down before His throne, and prays to Him in deep humility.

Enlightened by a ray from heaven, he hurries on in his pilgrimage to eternity—and stretches out his trembling hand for the crown of glory, “which fadeth not away”—to deck his immortal brow. What an inconceivable distance is interposed between the inanimate vegetable pollen and that exalted soul of man which thinks on God! What millions of steps on steps in undistinguishable succession, from the lowest creature with which we are acquainted, up to the eminence on which man is placed!

But how? Is this then the loftiest height? Does the divine ladder of creation end here? Does frail man rise directly to the Majesty of God? O my soul, withdraw thy view from this lower earth, and look upward to those regions, where unnumbered worlds, at immeasurable distances, continually revolve—and which, on account of their vast distance, we know only as glimmering specks. How dost thou feel at this wondrous sight? Thou beholdest—and perceivest new steps, new beings, new powers. But an impenetrable veil shrouds this glorious spectacle. By the aid of telescopes we

have now ascertained that all those little stars are worlds, not less in magnitude, and often many thousand times greater, than the earth which we inhabit.

If, then, I may infer from what I see here below, as to that which is yet dark to me above,—if the ladder to divine perfection be extended infinitely,—then there may, perhaps, be worlds similarly related to our earth, as the plant is to the animal, and the brute to man ;—so there may exist worlds in comparison of whose greatness and glory, our earth is only as an insignificant grain of dust. So there may exist worlds inhabited by higher beings, which progressively excel us, as we excel the plants and animals !

And the brilliant chain of creation may rise with them still higher, through the kingdom of possible, of perfect excellence. Can I then believe that I am the most perfect being of the Almighty's hand? I am so here below ;—but am I so in other regions ? How far is the series of better and higher spirits yet above me !

Heavenly beings, holy angels, archangels, or by whatever name the defective tongue of man may style you, ye raise yourselves, eternally, to the fountain of light, even to the High and Holy One ! Ah ! shall I ever attain to your sublimer stations ? Shall I, liberated from this earth, ascend to the

lowest of your series, and be permitted to press forward on higher and higher steps towards your and my Creator ?

And ye heavenly beings,—ye, who on the last step of perfection, rejoice in nameless blessedness, dwelling nigh unto the Deity, and admitted to His glory,—ye also dwindle into nothing before the majesty of the MOST HIGHEST ! Your existence originates with Him—but *He is self-existent*. He it is who was and will be—ye are only shadows. Your highest perfection and happiness are only faint beams of light ; but God is THE INFINITELY PERFECT ONE,—an ocean of radiance into which no cherub dares to look. (1 TIM. vi. 16.)

Lord, Lord ! O my God—Thou nameless and inscrutable ! I sink back, humbled in the dust, when the thought of thy Majesty pierces my soul with fear and rapture. O my God—O Thou Almighty Lord ! when my spirit is overwhelmed, in contemplating the wonders of Thy creation, with blissful feelings ;—when on the wings of its imagination it soars through the regions of infinity ;—when it sees from star to star, and from world to world, still more and more clearly the glory of Thy greatness ;—then *am I deeply sensible of my own absolute nothingness and poverty*. I am an insignificant point among millions and millions of beings, who inhabit Thy boundless universe. Ah ! all the

strength of my reason is necessary to convince me that Thou deignest to look down upon me in my abject humiliation ! Then a brighter light discloses to me the extent of Thy mercy—that Thou dost indeed regard me amongst the sons of men.

By what then, O my God and Lord, have I merited that Thou shouldst have assigned me so high a place in the scale of Thy creation ? I might have been a grain of dust, a plant, or a worm ; but Thou calledst me from nothing. Thy revelations have beamed upon me from the inmost recesses of Thy Holy Temple. I may, therefore, think on Thee, and hope for immortality—for Thy love is steadfast and inexhaustible.

I will strive, unweariedly strive, to climb higher on the divine ladder of creation. I will strive indefatigably, by holier conduct and the cultivation and improvement of my soul, to approach nearer to the sublime beings which stand above me. O Almighty God ! give me strength. Of myself I *am* nothing—I *have* nothing ! Through Thy mercy alone I am what I am, and have what I have. Without any merit whatever of my own, must I invoke Thy tenderest mercy, Thy never-failing love.

XXVII.

THE STARRY HEAVENS.

PSALM viii. 3, 4.

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

WHEN the lovely light of the sun vanishes at even-tide, and shades of darkness fall upon the towns and villages, the rocks and mountains;—when the busy tumult of life is hushed; and all wearied mortals, and other living creatures, sink into repose;—when this great globe itself, as it were dead, appears to us to rest like a corpse in its gloomy grave: then the night rises with inspiring solemnity, and the eternal stars shine from heaven on our darkness; we see no more our earth with its beauties and its deserts; we see only strange worlds, which look upon us with benignant smiles from the infinity of space.

Every night renews to me the image of my

death. Sleep, the brother of death, will close my eyes : my limbs seek rest—the world has no more charms—this darkened world has lost its light and ornaments. And Heaven alone now shines ! If death some day shall close my dim and failing eye, and this life sink for ever into night, and I lose sight of all sublunary objects—then still the heaven shines, and eternity is opened, in all its splendour, to my view.

The wisdom of the Creator has not ordained all this in vain. It is not in vain that He reminds me, by every night which obscures the globe, of the time when this earth will for ever pass from under me. It is not in vain that God causes the resplendent worlds of heaven continually to shine down upon me from immeasurable distance. They remind me of the prospects of eternity, of my endless existence beyond the grave. These distant stars are worlds, and all much greater than the world which I now inhabit. They twinkle with a glorious light in infinite space. They proclaim the greatness of the Creator, the mercy of the Eternal Father ; they are doubtless dwelling-places in the universe of God.

Half of my life is day—half of my life can I devote to earthly business, and belong to this world. But half of my life, alas ! is night, and strange worlds

blaze in the vast firmament above me, which seem to say to me : ' Consider *us* ! Thou belongest not to the earth alone—but to Heaven also. Thou art composed of body and soul ;—thy time consists of night and day ;—thou hast relation in part to this world, but in part also to eternity. Let not earth then make thee forget Heaven.'

But how indifferently does the worldly-minded mortal wander along beneath the splendour of the starry heavens ! how seldom does his mind raise itself, at the sight, to the majesty of Him who created the heavens and the earth ! He perceives not the greatness of the Almighty ; he understands not the witnesses of eternity which so eloquently address him. He at most admires, with childish pleasure, the glittering specks in the firmament, and finds amusement in the thousand suns above his head, without carrying his contemplations one step further—like the beast which, unconscious and lacking thought, heedlessly passes on through the wonders of creation.

But not so do you, O true disciple of Jesus Christ ! Never let the brightness and magnificence of the firmament appear to you in all its affecting radiance, without your entertaining thoughts of eternity. Never lift up your eye to the flaming suns and worlds of the boundless universe above

you, without at least reflecting on that majesty of God, and that omnipotence, which no human intellect can comprehend.

Imagine to yourself, while you look upwards, the *endless variety and number of those stars*. With the naked eye, in a clear atmosphere at night, we can number eleven hundred stars, that is, eleven hundred bodies larger than our globe. But if our weak sight be assisted and quickened by the use of telescopes, then we perceive in the vast space of heaven, which we survey, 80,000 stars, of which one is continually more remote than another in the wide expanse before us. Through the best telescopes we discern a vast number of constellations. Astronomers, by means of their strongest magnifying-glasses, have counted so many stars in one small spot of the heavens, that if all parts of the firmament were equally dense, the whole visible heaven would have above 75,000,000 of those celestial bodies. Could human art further sharpen the power of vision, so that it should pierce still remoter regions of the universe, the number of the heavenly bodies could no longer be expressed by human signs.

But the distance of the stars from our globe is not less wonderful than their multitude. Most of them revolve at so vast a distance from us, that they do not appear through the finest telescopes,

greater than we see them with the naked eye—there is no number which can express their distance from us. One of the nearest stars among those which shine by their own light, is the splendid day-star, the sun. It becomes larger when observed through a telescope, and yet its distance amounts to nearly 100,000,000 of miles. What an immense distance !

How small, at such a distance, appears this glorious irradiating body, which we call the sun,—which is, in fact, 1,448,000 times greater than our Earth ! The light of the sun, which takes scarcely more than eight minutes of time to fly through the immense space between its source, and the earth which it enlightens, would require as many years to travel through the yet more immeasurable space from the sun to the next star which shines by its own independent light.

How vast is the universe, how infinite ! And yet, we certainly see only the least part of these suns and worlds, wandering, as it were, in the boundless field of heaven. There still shine and revolve millions and millions of these in remote regions. For from century to century, astronomers have here and there espied a new strange star, which for the space of many years glittered near other stars, then shone weaker, and at length, losing itself in the infinity of the universe, totally disap-

peared. Whither has it gone, and upon whom does it now shine? In the same manner appear from time to time those stars, which are known by the name of Comets. They issue forth from undistinguishable distances, becoming gradually clearer and clearer—they shine with singular splendour—recede again from us—grow less, the further they return into boundless space; and shine fainter and fainter, until they entirely vanish from the eye. Who shall tell us whither, in the interminable universe, their orbit reaches?

These thousand stars which we can observe on a cloudless night with the naked eye, are in this respect like our sun, that they shine, as it does, by their own unborrowed light. They are, therefore, true, lucent suns, but indescribably distant from us, created to illumine other dark worlds or stars, which like our earth have no inherent light; or like the moon and the other stars, which are denominated planets, shine by reflected light.

Ten such greater planets, which receive their light from our sun (without the sun both they and we should sink into eternal torpidity and night), revolve around the sun. They are all worlds like our earth: some of them are smaller, others greater than the star which we inhabit. And the nearest of these worlds is nevertheless 37,000,000 of miles distant from the sun. But that world which

revolves at the greatest distance from the centre, is almost 2,000,000,000 of miles from it. The imagination shudders when it dwells on this inconceivable expanse, in which so many vast worlds, freely floating, move around the sun as their warming and enlightening centre. The soul loses itself in infinity, and trembles before the incomprehensible Majesty of the Creator.

And as the sun, around which our earth revolves, gives light and day to ten other worlds, besides their satellites; should those thousand millions of suns, which appear to us only as little stars, in vain put forth their light? Must they not each have their dark worlds to vivify and enlighten? How infinitely distant, then, must one sun, or star, with its satellites, be from another star—when we think we see them crowded together in the sky! Thus often, in a wood, the trees which stand far apart from each other, when viewed at a certain distance, seem to be placed in the closest contact.

O God, Thou Majestic God, who art glorified throughout the infinite creation, what a splendour—what a beam of light and life—what immensity—what eternity is here disclosed! “*When I consider thy Heavens, the work of Thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?*” (PSALM viii. 3, 4.)

But my amazement at the vastness of infinite space, which I call THE STARRY HEAVENS, increases with each new contemplation. I see a bright, resplendent stripe, like a distant shining cloud, drawn across the serene sky at night. This white, permanent, and lucid track, we call the milky-way. In vain does the eye, assisted by the most powerful lenses, attempt to penetrate this bright region of the heavens ; it finds nothing but one immense ocean of unvarying brilliancy. This consists of mingled beams from millions and millions of distant suns ;—it is the light of stars placed so far away in the unfathomable depth of heaven, that we can no longer see them separately. Only the last faint glimmer of their beams falls feebly on our sight. If we dwelt on some of the worlds revolving nearer to that milky-way, instead of the glittering, broad, celestial stripe, we should see an ocean of undulating light from millions of suns,—star so closely crowded with star, that all would appear to be one single flame.

The boldest imagination looks with awe on the infinity of creation. And could you with wings, swifter than the lightning—swifter than light—swifter than thought—transport yourself from star to star ;—if you had left the earth and its sun far, far behind you, and should fly from century to century, you would in vain seek for the *boundaries*

of the Universe. Continually would new stars and new creations open upon you at endless distances ; and when you had reached them, then would again, at fresh intervals, new resplendent worlds present themselves. You would find no end—no shore. You would lose yourself, bewildered in the infinity of existence. You could not reach the limit of Omnipotence, nor scan its works.

As far as human invention and art have hitherto been capable, the nature, and figure, and external surface, of the celestial bodies nearest to us have been investigated. The moon stands so near us, that astronomers, by the help of their apparatus, have already discovered a point in it, which upon earth would be about the size of one of the largest towns. They have discovered numerous mountains and valleys in it. But these mountains in the moon appear to be of an entirely different kind from the mountains on our earth. Many are extended in long chains round the whole circumference of the body ; others are like a ring, the centre of which is dark. Equally wonderful is the sun ! By accurate observation it has been rendered probable, that the sun also, like our earth, is an opaque habitable body, surrounded by a dazzling radiant light, which undulates over and around the body of the sun, as the dark clouds invest the earth. That light and brilliancy of the sun is often con-

fluent,—and often do the shining clouds seem to separate, and we perceive through them, as through a torn vail of rays, the dark surface of the disk. If that glorious world be inhabited by rational beings, they walk in perpetual light. An ocean of splendour fills their heaven ; whereas on earth we see watery clouds hovering over our heads in the loaded atmosphere.

And how should these worlds, these millions of worlds, have remained dead and uninhabited ? Would the omnipotence of God have called them into being without design or object ? Does our earth alone, one of the least of all the world-like bodies—a mere grain of dust in the infinite system of creation—enjoy the privilege of being tenanted by rational creatures, who can honour God and adore His Majesty ? Who can believe it ? Who can believe that the Creator's inexhaustible power and goodness, which on our earth have peopled even the least blade of grass, with worms and animals of every kind, would leave vast worlds inanimate and void ? No, no ! the universe is not in any part bereft of life ! Beings, who can revere the Lord, dwell, doubtless, in the remaining worlds, and glorify His name. The earth upon which we live, and whose existence would not be missed among so many millions of worlds, if it

should vanish into nothing ;—this earth, I say, which is, as it were, only a particle of dust in the boundless empire of the universe ;—this earth is not the only dwelling-place of intelligent creatures! Other beings, surely, more perfect and noble than ourselves, live in other worlds. They, too, belong to the family of the heavenly Father,—they also are the subjects of God's empire, and, perhaps, perform His holy will more perfectly than we. Oh, what a sublime insight have we into the realms of infinity! What endless grades of spiritual perfection! How the course stretches out beneath my eyes! How far above me stands the goal to which all my efforts tend! “*Be ye perfect*,”—the universe, no less than the Son of God, addresses us—“*be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*”

I fall down in supplication, O most High, Eternal God! I, who am myself but dust, sink in the dust before Thee! Thou, whose Name millions of beings in millions of worlds hallow with devotion—Thou who, as the source of blessing, inhabitest the endless universe, and pourest joy and rapture over all the stars—Thou, in whose light immeasurable worlds continually play, like atoms in the sun-beam; and whose creation knows no limits—Lord, Lord, before whose Majesty all spirits are struck

with awe, and the Seraph humbly hides his countenance—Thou great, Eternal—All ! Thou art my Father !

Oh, let me call Thee FATHER ! In that word there lies an unknown heaven for me, a blessedness, a peace worthy to be partaken of by Angels. Father, Father ! who art in Heaven, Thy name is hallowed through a thousand thousand worlds. Thy kingdom also has come to this our Earth ; and embraces in its blessings the vastness of Eternity.

Yes ;—when night, with inspiring glory rises up, and draws aside the vail of sun-beams from the firmament ; when from their endless distance, from the abysses of the universe thousands of new suns and worlds marvellously twinkle above our head, let not my enraptured sight be ever raised to the glory of the stars, without my thinking of Thy loftiness, magnificence, and might !

These stars declare Thy Majesty more worthily than the spirit of a mortal can declare it. Those stars which beam on me from the visible creation, are holy revelations from on high—are the prophets of eternity which call upon me with a cheering voice. They are predictions of that unknown world, which awaits me in futurity. O my God ! I have perhaps already cast my eyes on the secrets of eternity. Perhaps I have already seen the beams

of a world, which may one day be my world—in which, perhaps, the spirits of those I love, purified and exalted, even now exist in superhuman bliss. Ah ! they long no more for this earth ! Perhaps they barely perceive it as a little speck among the stars, and know not, that this spot was, for the space of a short dream, their dwelling-place—they know not that there yet exists upon this spot a living heart, which calls on them in vain.

O my soul—refrain from these daring speculations ! Thine eye transfers itself from star to star, whilst infinitely sweet forebodings of immortality hover round thee. Go, hide thyself in solitude—kneel before the throne of the Deity—and PRAY.

XXVIII.

THE COMET.

GENESIS i. 16.

"And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also."


MANY of us have witnessed one of the most glorious spectacles in the starry heavens. A strange star has shone with wonderful majesty on the world; and the inhabitants of the earth looked with astonishment, rapture, and fear upon the resplendent, hitherto unseen light, which has journeyed hither from the interminable depths of the universe, and has again disappeared from hence.

In the silent hour of evening, when the benignant night veils the face of nature, and above us glitters in all its glory the eternal, brilliant realm—then the eye of the wise man raises itself, with wonder and reverence, to contemplate this strange star; and he silently asks: 'From what region of the boundless universe, O thou beauteous Comet, hast thou floated through the firmament, even down to us?

Oh how many spirits, much more perfect than ourselves—in worlds which we have never yet discovered even as faint stars, have been saluted by thy light! Whither now dost thou speed thy course,—thou noble star, who sailest through the immeasurable expanse with such rapidity? If beings capable of thought, inhabit thee, with what rapture must they admire the revelations of God in their marvellous journey through the plain of heaven,—sown, as it is, with stars and flames! Oh how much more must the Omnipotence of the Creator shine—how much more clearly disclose itself to them!

Thus thinks the wise man—the Christian philosopher;—his soul is deeply humbled, and filled with piety and devotion:—he thus adores the majesty of the Eternal, the Incomprehensible Creator: “*When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?*”

But it is with melancholy feelings that we often hear expressed absurd notions and groundless apprehensions of the appearance of a comet. Many regard it without any other impression, than that of the same stupid, thoughtless astonishment, which they generally evince at every unusual sight.—Scarcely can their sluggish curiosity be roused to



inquire any deeper into the nature and arrangement of the heavenly ordinances. They pass on, with thoughtlessness or apathy,—as the beast overlooks the most exquisitely pencilled flower of the field. The whole blazing world of stars is not able to kindle in their spirit one sublime thought, or to draw their souls one step nearer to the contemplation and veneration of the Lord of those heavenly hosts. In vain has the Creator unfolded to them one of the newest wonders of His creation—they pass by: their sight is rather fixed on the dust of the earth, on the trifles which delight them. These are they of whom the Holy Scripture says, “*They have eyes and see not ; ears have they, and hear not.*”

It is an afflicting proof, how little many men are accustomed to think on what they see;—how insignificant the most weighty matter becomes to them, if it do not contribute to the support of their body—to the gratification of their palate—to the indulgence of their favourite amusements. What can they want of the Deity, if they will not attend when He addresses them? What revelation can they demand, if they unconsciously pass over the most glorious—when the universe, and infinity, and omnipotence, become but a secondary consideration to them, during their quest of the bread which perisheth, at their card-tables and gaming-

houses—their entertainments and revelries? They, indeed, press into the narrow walls of their churches, built by human hands—and fancy that they shall satisfy their God with forms of prayer : but in the great temple of creation—the carpet of which is the broad blooming earth—its altar the lofty mountains—its roof the firmament studded with radiant worlds—nothing elevates their minds. This is the consequence of the deficient education of our children. These pitiable objects are, with much trouble, put upon a footing with ingenious beasts, which in time know how to procure for themselves their needful nourishment, by various means and practices. They are brought up as peaceable inhabitants of a little heap of rubbish, called a town or village ; but not as souls—as the subjects of the great empire of souls, to which they originally belong ; not as citizens and inhabitants of the universe, of which they are members ; not as sons and daughters of the Eternal, who encircles them with His glory, and is the Father of us all. Hence the turbid source of so much vulgarity, wickedness, and selfishness of mind :—hence the origin of so much evil in society—evil of which we often complain, and even rashly enough accuse the divine Director of the world ;—though no one, except the man who is pressed down in the mire and dust of this short earthly

life, can be guilty of so much folly and injustice. Hence the inability of the early-corrupted and neglected mind of so many thousands, to rise above itself and the world; and to seek the supreme good of man in constant benevolence, virtue, truth, justice, and self-improvement. A no less proof of the neglect and ignorance of men, even in countries which might boast of wise institutions, and conscientious rulers, is the still generally prevailing fear and anxiety at the appearance of a comet. This prejudice, indeed, is no longer prevalent among any people to such a degree as it was a century or more ago; but yet, especially among country-folks, it is sufficiently extensive. The superstition of these ignorant people torments them with predictions, as fearful as they are foolish. It sees in the glittering star, which hovers over our horizon for the glory of the Creator—not the goodness and majesty of the Almighty and All-wise, to whom Jesus taught us to pray as to our Father—but a scourge of wrath, a threatening of the terrible Jehovah, a forerunner of awful visitation on the guilty, and on the innocent.

I would not deride the fears of ignorant persons,—but pity them. They know not their God, their Father. They know not Him who reveals Himself as perfect Love; and interpret in a childish,

unreasonable way, what, as Ruler of the universe, He does for its advantage. But these thousands are innocent of this their unholy error, so contrary to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Their own teachers, their spiritual guardians, are the guilty—if from mistaken zeal they confirm them in falsehood and fear ; or, with frivolous thoughtlessness, teach them nothing better, and give them no more worthy idea of God. Their superiors are to blame, if they make the superstitious and ignorant the objects of their wit, and amuse themselves with their visionary terrors—but are unmindful of their duty to promote the truth, and to widen its empire—which is the kingdom of God—by making better provision for public instruction, and for the schools of the lower ranks. They are guilty and answerable before the Judge of all actions, who from base selfishness, from arrogance, or pride of being better born, will willingly and intentionally suffer their fellow-creatures of a, so called, low origin, to continue in their inherited error and mental darkness. What origin, indeed, is more or less noble before God ? Do not all our spirits proceed from the same divine and holy source ? What right have we to despise the calling which God has himself assigned to every soul of man ? What right have we, who style ourselves Christians, to frustrate in our bre-

thence the work and end of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world—of Him who came into the world, to terminate the dominion of darkness ; and, through the light of His word, through the more worthy representation and knowledge of the Most High, to enlighten the understanding of us all, to ennoble our minds, and to bring us to God His Father ?

Horrible may the crimes often be, which are committed by transgressors against the prosperity and well-being of society—but far more horrible are those offences which are perpetrated, with impunity, against the excellence and life of the human soul. “ *Fear not them which kill the body.*”

Let us, however, turn away our eyes from this contemplation of low feelings, degrading passions, and pitiable wrongs. Even to those untutored beings will divine aid be granted, and to them who wander in darkness will the day of a better light hereafter dawn. Do we not see how, by the Providence of God, wise and meritorious men are continually raised up—who gladly take an interest in those that are forsaken ?—How God directs the heart of noble princes and magistrates to found better institutions, in order to cultivate the neglected mental powers of their people, to destroy the force of superstition, and to eradicate the soul-killing prejudices which prevail among them ?

But do thou, O my soul, raise thyself on the

wings of devotion to the admiration and adoration of thy God—of whose power and love the flaming Comet is a herald—that Comet which comes from infinite distance, and into infinite space now hastens back !

All the suns of heaven have had their established, well-regulated orbits appointed to them from the beginning, by the nod of the Almighty. Around each of the fixed stars, or suns, revolve, as the moon does round the earth, other vast worlds called planets, which receive light from their respective suns. Such a wandering star is the Earth also, in which, for the short space of a few years, I must now dwell. My soul is clothed with the dust of this planet ;—but the time will come, when the body shall return to the dust from which it was taken, and the divine spark, the soul, mount upwards to new connexions, to new worlds ! And round the earth, enlightened by the sun, revolves its constant companion, or satellite, the moon. Other moons, invisible to the naked eye, but perceptible with telescopes, roll around other stars—which are worlds like the earth on which we breathe.

What infinity of power and glory, — what a “depth of riches !”—How small, in such immeasurable space, becomes the atom which I inhabit ! How contemptibly small the little which I esteem my wealth, my property !

And as all the suns, worlds, and moons of the divinely created universe—so also the Comets have had their orbits assigned from the beginning. But their course appears to run through almost endless space, and within the sphere of several suns. The common length of the life of man is sufficient for calculating the periods of the earth and planets, which derive their illumination from our sun—but the times of the revolutions of Comets no one yet knows certainly—for the observations of a thousand years are necessary for this purpose. Their number too is very great—nearly a hundred have already been observed and noted, of those which approach our earth. Sometimes two of them have at once glittered in the firmament—at other times half a century has passed and scarcely one has been discovered ;—perhaps they shone for a few days, perhaps for half a year. Only one single comet have the astronomers so accurately observed, that they can calculate its return with tolerable precision. It appears to make its orbit through the heavens in a space of about seventy-six years.

These roving stars are very little known to us ; but they appear to borrow their light from other suns. There was seen in the year 1744 a comet, of which only one half was illuminated, like the moon in its quarters—and others have been seen,

which became more brilliant when they came back from the region of the sun, and departed from us.

Also, in regard to their size, there is as great a variety in these comets, as in all the works of the Creator. Some are so small, that, although they come moderately near our earth, they nevertheless are scarcely, often not at all, visible, with the naked eye. Others, again, shine with the brightness of the moon. Some are surrounded by a halo of glittering vapour. Others stretch a flaming tail over half the expanse of heaven.

Of what this wonderful train of light, which attends some comets, consists, is to us unknown. But it is thinner than the thinnest air of the earth, for notwithstanding its extraordinary size, it remains so clear and transparent, that we may see the most distant stars glimmer through its substance. Perhaps it is composed of a part of that wonderful light which is spread over the universe, and which floats around the sun like a glittering cloud, or shines under the name of northern lights in those unexplored extremities of the globe, called the poles.

But is it not a chastisement of God ?—No ; the All-loving does not thus punish those worlds which He called out of nothing, to be the objects of His blessing. He does not so punish His worlds,—for

the passions of the ignoble human heart do not exist in the Most Holy ; and even when the Sacred Scriptures speak of the anger of the Lord, they use this awful image only for the sake of people who live in intellectual childhood, and are accustomed to represent to themselves the most Sublime Being under a human figure, because our feeble comprehension and contracted powers of language are incompetent to a more worthy representation of the Deity. The Divine Love is not revengeful—it is man who takes vengeance on himself. The Divine Love revenges not—it is the sin of man which takes vengeance on him—in order that he may learn to abhor it, and to strive after spiritual perfection. The sufferings which we bring upon ourselves, through our trespasses and follies, are the fire which scorches us—but purifies and cleanses us from all that is polluting and ignoble.

Perhaps it is the destination of those far-traveling comets to distribute and excite the enlivening matter of light, and many other unknown powers beneficial to the universe,—to carry to worlds far distant from the sun certain fresh supplies. Perhaps the fertility, the productive warmth, the serene sky of particular summers may have been effects of those distant stars,—a drop of their influence which descended on our earth.

But how should I be able to explain the secrets

of Thine Omnipotence—the wonders of Thy wisdom, O Thou Almighty, Thou All-wise! Only in silence can I humbly lift up my prayer to Thee, and praise Thy glory and Thy greatness. I can only feel the blessedness,—the greatest which I have on earth—that I dare to call Thee, whom numberless worlds, infinitely distant in the unsearchable depths of the created universe, tremblingly adore—that I dare to call Thee, around whom Seraphs bend in silence—my FATHER! O Most Sublime—Thou Creator of the least and lowliest thing, Thou art also my Creator, my God, my Father! O Thou whose greatness and existence no understanding can penetrate or conceive, whose nod gave to millions of worlds their unalterable, firmly established courses—whose omnipotent hand bears up the whole infinity of things—Thou hast love for me also;—for I too am in Thine empire, and I exist, because Thou didst will it. Surely then I cannot be lost, I cannot be unhappy—for Thou, Lord, art my God, my Creator, my Father!

XXIX.

THE SPEECH OF MEN.

GENESIS xi. 6—8.

"And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city."

It is true, that to all mortals is given, by the wisdom and mercy of the Creator, the wonderful faculty of incorporating that which is purely mental, and of clothing the thoughts in audible language, in order to communicate them to other kindred beings: but of the many millions who enjoy this gift of the Deity, there are comparatively few individuals who have ever reflected on its extraordinary qualities and value. Speech, this exclusive property of rational beings—this primary art of that which is immortal, superior to sense, and most excellent within us,—whereby we make terrestrial things the

means and instruments of our designs—this salutation of spirits to spirits, in which they reciprocally testify to each other the equality of their nature, and destination—is well worthy the regard and admiration of the wise ;—as is every thing, indeed, which testifies of the grace of God.

In the earlier days of mankind, nearer the time of their creation, when they probably thought less on the invention and gratification of new and artificial bodily wants, but more on what related to Divine things, they doubtless meditated also on the origin of the differences in the speech of nations.

A valuable ancient record which Moses has transmitted to succeeding generations, in the first of his books, has been fully verified.

After the days of the flood, the whole earth was of one language and of one speech ; and the posterity of Noah went down into the plain of Shinar. There they greatly multiplied—there they chiefly lived by feeding cattle, and required much room for their herds—so that whole families were often obliged to remove, in order to find pasturage. Then they might frequently lose themselves for ever from their friends, and not regain the dwellings of their fathers. It was therefore determined, as has been supposed, to build a high tower, whose top should reach to heaven, in order that every one might have a land-mark, by which he might descry

his home from any distant part. But this was contrary to the design of God, who willed, that the whole earth should be peopled with men. And on this account, it is said, He confounded their tongue, so that they could not understand each other's language. Thus the Lord dispersed them from Babel into all lands. (GEN. ii. 1—9.)

It is very useless trouble to enquire what the first language of mankind might have been. What the Scripture teaches us—that in the beginning all the world had one language and speech—is confirmed, both by simple reflection, and by the nature and peculiar relationship of all languages to one another. This relationship is, however, far more defined and lasting in certain sounds, whereby things are denoted, than in the words themselves. For in the beginning, without doubt, when a man wished to describe an object, the same was, as it were, delineated and represented by sounds, which either imitated its peculiar tone, or expressed its outward form or effect. Therefore are all the languages of the most ancient nations as full of imagery and painting as they are poor in words. Thus among the Hebrews, the name of God designates every thing great, high, wonderful or sublime—for God is the most mysterious, enduring, powerful and exalted Being in existence. Therefore they call a great cedar, a high mountain, or the dreadful effects

of a cause unknown to them, the cedar of God, the mountain of God, the power of God. But the richness of the imagery of language among these ancient people, was increased by the vivacity of their imagination. For as this delightful faculty of the human mind is usually the first, next to the memory, which displays itself in great power in children,—so it is also with youthful nations. The understanding is afterwards matured by observation and manifold experience :—with the growth of knowledge the deceptions of the imagination gradually subside.

The human spirit, ever active, does not however wait for the tedious acquisition of partial experience. It reflects on all things, and their causes. That which ignorance of the object conceals from it, it supplies through the power of the imagination. Thence it comes that children, to whom no one has ever related stories calculated to excite superstitious terror, when they find themselves frightened in the dark, invent a horrible cause for the thing which alarms them ;—that they hold conversations with lifeless beings,—and love or are angry with them, as if they had sense and feeling. They animate in their imagination every thing that surrounds them.

Such was the case with the nations of antiquity in the times of their infancy. They designated every thing by symbols, and borrowed from visible

things names for those which are invisible. The omnipresence of the Most High, they denominated the eye—the omnipotence, the arm of God. Nay, whilst they represented to themselves the most perfect of beings under an image of human form, they even attributed to Him those imperfections which they could never have praised in themselves—anger, revenge, jealousy, hatred, hard-heartedness. They gave life, in their imagination, even to things inanimate. In their narrations every thing has action and speech. If they wished to represent the displeasure of God at the disobedience of man, then they described God as speaking. For all appearances, with the cause of which they had not become acquainted by experience, they imagined one. Thus, according to their fancy, the inanimate was personified—to every fountain was given a spirit, to every tree, a soul. From this process sprung at length idolatry and heathenism,—and with religion fiction grew. Nations which, by the preservation of the records of many hundred years, have divested themselves of the errors of imagination—whose understanding consequently is matured much quicker—lose with the images of imagination also the figurativeness of expression. Their language becomes richer in words, and the word less a picturesque than an arbitrary designation of the object. Hence fiction can only be exercised among them as an

art—being no longer the effect of nature and speech, as with nations in the ages of their inexperienced infancy. The confusion or difference of human language must necessarily have commenced as soon as the first families separated from each other upon the face of the earth, in cases where they found not, in narrow limits, nourishment enough for themselves and their flocks.

To this, above all things, the difference of the climates under which they afterwards lived, contributed. The influence upon the human body of warm or hot, temperate or cold, damp or dry, high or low situations and regions, is well known. The inhabitants of raw, cold countries, are strong and hardy in their limbs. The sinews, muscles, and inward parts of their bodies are firmer and drier. Hence with the hardness of their organs of speech, their utterance becomes rougher and stronger. The inhabitants of warm and hot countries are more sensitive, relaxed, and tender—so is their speech more fluent and delicate. Since then all letters have originated from a few fundamental letters, which, according as they are harder or softer, spoken more with the tongue and throat, or the teeth and lips, suffer many variations ;—since, in consequence of these different modes of utterance, the sound of one letter almost imperceptibly passes into that of another,—as the letter B into V, F. PF. or P—

it is very evident how the same word, if it be spoken by different nations, who dwell in different climates, at length sounds quite unlike itself. Thus, among nations who at the present day speak one language, dialects differing from one another have arisen so frequently from the dialects of the original people who separated, that at last new and totally different languages have been formed.

The difference in languages must necessarily also be promoted by the difference of the modes of thinking, which are found in various nations. The inhabitants of cold climates are more industrious, because their soil requires greater diligence in the cultivation ;—they are more intrepid, because Nature makes them more hardy and insensible to difficulty, more grave and thoughtful. The inhabitants of warm regions are more sensual and light-minded, more vehement, more irritable, more futile, more addicted to works of imagination than to the exercise of deep reflection. In hot climates man is more relaxed, lazy, and inactive in body and mind. All this operates upon the language, upon the song, upon the accentuation of the words, upon the greater or less change of the words in speaking. Not less does it operate upon the difference of employments and occupations, and on the invention of means to embellish life—thence also upon the greater or less enrichment of the language with

new signs and expressions of the wants peculiar to each people.

Lastly, the dispersion of men into different regions, where they found entirely different natural phenomena—other plants, other animals, other dangers, other wants, caused great alteration in their languages. Thus the tongues separated more and more from one another. The perpetual wars, the vast emigrations of great nations from their place of abode, in order, by the subjugation of other nations, to appropriate to themselves their fruitful regions, have occasioned a mixture of the most dissimilar tribes and languages. Ancient nations and languages disappeared, which had flourished for hundreds of years, and new languages were formed from the mixed fragments of the old ones. When afterwards the tribes became more settled in their abodes, and no longer supplanted one another, their languages did not become more fixed—for now one people adopted the inventions of another, exchanged with one another, in reciprocal intercourse and commerce, ideas, regulations, and the produce of the ground; and together with these, the signs of foreign things—or their words. No language could remain long the same. And, as the language of the present day is different from that which was spoken by the same people a thousand years ago, so does it probably differ much

from that which will be spoken a thousand years hence.

Thus, as we recognize in the roughness or smoothness of the language, the influence of climate; and in the fluency and accentuation of speech, the disposition of a nation,—so the mental activity of a people manifests itself in the peculiar copiousness of the language. For the more lively, creative, and clear the mind is, the more zealously it endeavours to mark by a peculiar name every thing it knows or thinks, in order that it may communicate its ideas to others. We fall, however, into a great error if we suppose, that man without speech would be incapable of thought. Thought is not the fruit of words—but the word is the fruit of thought. How could we mark the thought by a word, before it was conceived?

The human mind thinks just as well without any speech, as the human soul can conceive a pleasant or unpleasant occurrence, without giving an external sign of pleasure or of grief. Deaf and dumb persons, who have no internal defect by which the activity of their mind is checked,—deaf and dumb persons who have never heard a sound—think not less than they who have the power of speech and hearing. It is a proof of this, that they easily invent a set of signs, by means of gestures, to communicate their thoughts.

Indeed, because we are accustomed to speech, and the constant communication of our ideas, it appears to us as if we could not think otherwise than in definite words ; and as if, without depicting our thoughts in words, we should not be able to think at all.

Yet even an infant, which cannot as yet speak, teaches us by its outward actions that it has some ideas and notions. A child who first learns to speak, manifests, in its stammering and difficult search for tone and sound to express what it would say, that it has more thoughts than words to utter them. And whom, if he paid a moderate attention to himself, would it have escaped, that he fails to express the most beautiful and abstract of his ideas, because either he possessed not sufficient practice in the representation of them by speech, or the language was too poor in words for the development of his thoughts ?

The thinking of the spirit is a wonderfully rapid operation, to which nothing earthly is to be compared in velocity. We utter in the words of a discourse, not a thousandth part of what we actually feel within us, but only single parts of the rapid stream of thought, where it casts up, as it were, the highest waves. We often indicate these, and understand ourselves distinctly ;—we indeed see a perfect connexion between what we have said,

and what we have thought ; but it is dark and indefinite to the person who hears it, because he knows not the transient series of other ideas, which we have not been able to express at the same time with it in words ;—for the tongue is infinitely slower than the swift course of thought.

When therefore in death the soul or spirit parts from the body, thinking does not end on account of the organs of speech becoming dust and ashes in the grave. Nothing is wanting to the soul except the means of communicating its thoughts to earthly natures. But that spirits are able still hereafter to act on other spirits, and to communicate also with them, without the intervention of fleshly organs—who can doubt ?

Who has measured the infinite creative powers of Almighty God ? As the earthly body in many things cripples the soul, and becomes its fetter, so is speech only a troublesome, difficult, and imperfect means of representing its swift inward motions. That which is better and more perfect remains reserved for it in freedom and in glory.

But, perhaps, speech is at the same time, by its natural difficulty, an excellent counterpoise to the volatile activity of the soul ; the latter feels itself obliged to tarry longer on single objects. It acquires also, by that means, a deeper knowledge of them, and a more clear perception of their reality.

Thus arises the duty of mankind to give greater diligence to the perfecting of their language, partly in order that they may be more capable of communicating all their ideas to others—partly that they may be more clear themselves. He who can think distinctly, will know how to express himself distinctly; and, on the other hand, he who can make himself intelligible to others, shews that he has understood himself, and thinks with clearness. As a word may be considered the clothing of a thought, so is speech in general the image of the inmost soul. From the language of a nation we know all the traits and peculiarities of their mode of thinking, and of their general character.

He who, therefore, in love to his country, would preserve the virtues and peculiarities of his people, *let him defend its language against every foreign invasion, and against all mixture with the languages of other nations.* For to each individual that only is right, proper, and beneficial, which is natural to him;—every thing foreign and imitated is merely borrowed, and does not really benefit, but rather disfigures and caricatures us.

You find a pleasure in decorating your person with costly or becoming clothes,—through them you mark your station in public life, your fortune, your rank. Now, if the spirit be more precious than the body, and language, as it were, the clothes of the

spirit,—then do not take less trouble about your language than your wardrobe. By speech, you manifest the richness or poverty, and the rank of your soul, as well as that of your nation, compared with other people in regard to mental powers.

Every thing, O my Creator, which Thou hast given us for the increase of our perfection, is worthy of our grateful attention ; and it is a matter of duty that we should use it wisely.

But language is one of the most excellent and valuable of divine gifts to the human race ; through it souls on earth reveal themselves to one another, —through it we adore Thee, we pray to Thee, O Thou All-good ! He who neglects this noble endowment, does he not rob himself of an inestimable advantage, and render himself incapable both of teaching and of learning what is salutary to him ? Is not this to be esteemed neglect of one of the talents which Thou hast entrusted to us, and of the application of which we must give an account hereafter ?

Praised be Thy holy name, and Thine eternal mercy, for the languages of all created beings,—until we can praise Thee still more worthily, with the tongues of angels. Amen.

XXX.

THE GREATNESS OF GOD IN SMALL
THINGS.

PSALM CXXXIX. 14, 17, 18.

"I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee."

CONTINUALLY do I turn back from the oppressive tumult of the world to Thee, O my Creator, and to the contemplation of the wonders with which Thou surroundest me. Here I ever find my sweetest recreation, and the most healthful renewal of my powers. Here I see the Majesty of Thine Omnipotence and Wisdom more splendidly displayed—here, more strikingly, the proofs of Thine all-pervading, all-blessing goodness,—here, more distinctly, the effects of Thy watchful Providence.

And who could remain dumb, while the solemn hymn of universal nature ascends to heaven? Who

could remain untouched in the splendour of that wide creation which surrounds us in such infinite variety ?

Whither should I turn my eyes to observe most clearly the might and glory of the Creator ?—Should I number the worlds which beam from the nightly sky, as suns poised in the broad expanse ? or admire the mysterious economy of the clouds, in whose bosoms storms and tempests dwell—with the vast waterfloods ? Shall I investigate the properties of the elements, the wonderful materials of which the universe is formed ; and whose harmony or discord fructifies or destroys the quarters of the globe ?

God is great in all His works. Why seek Him in the distant spheres ? His power and wisdom are not more sublime, nor more incomprehensible, in the paths of heaven, where worlds, suns, and moons revolve in unalterable orbits and undeviating regularity, than in the sap-vessels, veins and fibres of the smallest leaves of the smallest flower which expands its bosom in the sun-beam. The Lord is every where great, and every where like Himself—in the wide universe and in the blade of grass.

The life of a single plant should be sufficient to persuade the most obstinate sceptic of the existence of a Supreme Providence and Wisdom. But who can worthily or intelligibly describe, how a germ

developes itself from the smallest seed, which after years becomes a widely-spreading tree, affording refreshment, protection, abode, and nourishment to many hundreds, nay thousands, of living creatures upon it and beneath it? Every tree is a little world of animals of various kinds; nay, every leaf is a city inhabited by a population of creatures scarcely discernible to the naked eye. God cares for all. For them there is no other world than this tree on which they dwell. It stands for a hundred years, and thousands of generations have been born and have perished on it. But our oaks often attain the age of five hundred years, and upon Lebanon cedars still stand which are supposed to have seen the days of Solomon.

Each province of the globe is adorned by the hand of the Creator with its peculiar plants. But those which afford a wholesome nourishment to man, are of such a nature, that they may be almost universally transplanted to any region where mortals dwell.

In former times the countries of our district were immense wastes, the habitations of wild beasts—for the most part covered with unfruitful trees and inedible herbs. Now are these countries like a great garden, furnished with the most beautiful and useful plants from all corners of the earth. Almost all our fruit-trees, which have now been long natu-

ralized among us, were transplanted from warm eastern countries; even so the most lovely of our flowers and kitchen herbs. The peach and rose from Persia and Syria; corn from the higher Asia, —the nourishing potato from America—as well as the maize, or Turkish wheat, which at its fullest increase produces from three to six hundred fold.

Every one of these numberless kinds of plants is formed differently from the other; no one is like another, and each is best adapted to its object. Look at the corn which clothes the fields—every stalk proclaims the love and wisdom of the Lord.

This stalk grows slender and high above the earth, in order that the grain may not be mildewed or corrupted by the dampness of the evaporating soil. The length of the stalk favours the greater purifying of the sap, which rises through it from the roots—that the mealy fruit may be of a better quality. The long course which the sap has to traverse from the soil upwards, allows the sun, also, to prepare it more effectually. Slender, indeed, and thin is the reed on whose point the ear so elegantly waves; yet to prevent the breaking of it by the wind, there are strong knots, whose fine internal perforations afford sufficient passage to the rising sap and to the warmth of the sun's rays. Near the

main stalk grow the sheathing leaves to gather the rain and dew of heaven, to give drink to the growing plant. But if it be nearly ripe, then the leaves wither, in order, that all nourishment may go undivided to the ear, the grains of which are furnished with long prickles, as a defence against the birds. Nothing is formed without beneficent views ; and they are not wanting even when our shortsightedness is not capable of perceiving them. Even the so-called weeds, are beneficial plants, if not always for the husbandman, yet for medicine, ointment, and for use in various trades and arts. Even the vermin, which live under and above the ground, have, in the economy of nature, an important destination ; and conduce to the general good, although their accumulation in particular places may, sometimes, be hurtful to the designs of man.

Perhaps those strata of the fields and meadows, which no plough breaks up, would at length become as hard as stone, and as unfruitful, if they were not every year pierced and loosened by millions and millions of worms, beetles, slugs, and other animals. The underground intricate passages, cells, and dwellings of these little creatures, are just so many artificially formed canals through which the fertilizing rain penetrates into the deep soil, and the air can carry fresh nutriment to the roots. God has ordained every thing more wisely

than mortal man can know or comprehend. When man, with childish rashness, bewails the interruptions of his own individual designs or errors by the course of nature,—even then there is bestowed upon him, without his knowledge, a substantial benefit ; the consequences of which extend over many years, to replace a hundred-fold the temporary loss.

Yet, in order to understand the abode, habits, and edifices of every single worm, the period of a thousand years would be too short. How richly are the earth and water peopled ! Who knows even the names of all these innumerable creatures ? The weaker they appear, and the easier their demolition would be, the more tenacious are they of their life : thus, for example, are the slugs, whose whole composition seems scarcely any thing but a dissolving slime. But not only do parts which are cut off reproduce themselves in many kinds, but often from the severed parts themselves will spring a separate and perfect animal ;—as in the case of the species called sea-stars, and on which may be counted above eighty thousand joints or rays with which they spread themselves out to feel around them. Even the mode of life of these little-noticed animals, which we have daily before our eyes, is wonderful. But who knows them ? It is only of a few worms and insects that the forms and occupations are well known. How should we


then comprehend the ends to be accomplished by all these things in the divine creation ? There are millions of them which are scarcely perceptible through the strongest magnifying glasses.

It is ascertained, that in a single drop of water, many hundred of insects swim about as freely as in an ocean. It is proved that man, not only in his internal parts and skin, but even in the blood which circulates through his veins, harbours and nourishes numberless living creatures. Thus is the human body a great moving world for millions of different, little, imperceptible creatures—as the whole earth is for the human race.

The life of these creatures is, indeed, but very transitory ; but on that account their increase is so much the more enormous—that their kind may never be extinct. The longest life of many insects is scarcely from the rising to the going down of the sun ; but they produce in that time millions of posterity. The silkworm lays about five hundred eggs. The queen bee about forty thousand. There is in Africa a kind of ants called *Termites*, which raise such considerable edifices, that, at a distance, they may be taken for the villages of men. The prolific bee herself becomes very many times bigger in circumference than she commonly is, and then lays, within four and twenty hours, about eighty thousand eggs.

Often, indeed, have the diligent ant, and the useful and ingenious bee, excited the admiration of observers ;—the spider also with its eight eyes and eight legs, and his skilfully constructed web. But whose eye can penetrate the true secret of their economy and arts ? There prevail in these a perfect order, and wise adaptation of means to the end, which are quite inexplicable. Who teaches the young spider to perform its tender work, of which four hundred threads are only as thick as three single ones of a full grown insect ? Four million threads of a young spider's weaving have not the thickness of a single human hair.

The inhabitants of the water alone—the much diversified fishes—are, in regard to their vast increase, like the insects. And yet all fishes live a longer time than most insects. A pike kept in a pond, having been marked by putting a copper ring round the head, lived to be above a hundred and fifty years old. But obstacles of quite another kind are opposed to the increase of fishes. They themselves devour each other and their eggs. Then men, quadrupeds, and birds, are accustomed to seek in the animated waters a great portion of their food. Though one herring may bear and lay twenty thousand, and one carp three hundred thousand eggs, the number of fish never becomes excessive.



Besides, in the sea there are many monsters ready to lessen their number,—such as the whale, which is often from seventy to an hundred feet long, and sometimes weighs from sixty to seventy hundred-weight—which feeds on the shoals of little fishes, and becomes with its blubber and bone one of the most useful animals in supplying the necessities of man ; or the voracious shark, whose jaws, furnished with a six-fold row of moveable teeth, swallow men and horses almost whole.

The more formidable and hurtful animals are, the more sparing is their increase, or their multiplying is more difficult. Thus Divine Providence takes care to keep every thing in an eternal balance. Although the mighty crocodile lays yearly about one hundred eggs in the sand of hot countries, yet it does not exist in great numbers. Lions and tigers wander in their deserts—vultures and eagles hover singly in the air.

The most useful of four-footed beasts, as well as of birds, are generally capable of sufficient increase, and flourish almost every where—whether man pitch his dwelling in hot, or cold, or moderate climates. Noxious creatures are, on the other hand, fixed to their native places. The horse, the dog, the sheep, the ox, and the domestic poultry, will live and thrive every where in the service of man ; but the bear is found only in his solitary rocks and

caves, or on fields of ice—the voracious hyena in the uninhabited and gloomy wilderness.

And each of these voracious kinds of creatures, although they dwell together with us, forms a distinct empire of its own. No one understands the language of the others, their customs, or their signs. The ant comprehends only the signals of her own species—the bee only those of bees—the raven only the croak by which the raven calls—the swallow only the twitter of its kind, when nests are to be built, or the congregating, for a common departure in the Autumn, is to take place:—the stork only understands the stork, when winging their passage through the highest regions of the atmosphere, over lands and seas.

God has divided them by impassable limits. As man only interprets the speech of man, and all people of the earth make one connected whole, every species of animals is a world existing for itself. What goes on therein, after what laws it acts, how it thinks, how it feels, how it looks upon external things—no other being, which is not within its sphere, can know. Every one is insulated by itself, without communication with any others;—it is the DEITY alone who knows the secrets of every family of creatures. If man were initiated into the nature, the inclinations, the instinct and signs of communication of but one single class besides his own, what

an immense treasure of knowledge and extent of discovery would there be opened to him ! The whole creation would appear in a new light before him.

Yet to what purpose is this ? Man has not yet found out all that is worthy of being known in his own race. With thoughtlessness and indifference he passes, like the beasts, over every thing which is not for his meat and drink, his clothing, his house, or for the gratification of his senses. Not only his soul, but even his visible body, is often an un contemplated secret. And yet how wonderfully is even that body framed, and how exalted above the forms of other animals ! Every breathing of the lungs is the continuance of an astonishing wonder ; and every beating of the heart, which drives the human blood, within the space of five or six minutes, through all the intricate veins and tender vessels of the whole body, is a wonder no less astonishing.

When should I be able to cease relating wonders if I were to describe the artificial construction, the nice organization, of all parts of the human body, or explain their appropriate order—in what manner a skeleton of more than 250 bones held together by rough ligatures, surrounded by veins, vessels, juices of various kinds, and skins, constitutes the noble figure of a mortal man ;—or how the flesh formed of 500 muscles, and perforated on all sides by delicate nerves, is the residence of the senses,

through which the whole immeasurable universe finds access to the soul!

O my Creator, with David will I say : “ *I will praise Thee ; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them ! If I count them, they are more in number than the sand : when I awake, I am still with Thee.*” (PSALM CXXXIX. 14. 17, 18.)

Lord Almighty, wise and merciful Creator—the deeper my soul plunges into the wonders of Thy works, the more unfathomable does Thy empire seem, the more incomprehensible Thy majesty. I lose myself, shuddering, in the infinity of Thy might, and yet I know but the smallest part of it. I live on a grain of dust, surrounded by a globule of air ; and this is the world, the magnitude of which astounds me. O God, who am I that Thou shouldest be mindful of me ? But my soul soars above the dust, above the atmosphere, and presses on from world to world towards Thee, O Thou adored Jehovah ! My spirit is Thy breath—to it belongs Thy love, Thine eternity. To know Thee will ever be its sweetest pleasure. How gloriously dost Thou appear, O Thou who art eternal, in the sanctuary of Thy works ! Amen.

XXXI.

IS A LINGERING OR A SUDDEN DEATH TO BE PREFERRED ?

PART I.

MATTHEW vii. 20, 21.

“ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

How much is every one of us agitated by intelligence of the sudden death of a friend—by a report of the decease even of one of our acquaintances, whom only a few hours or a few days before we saw, conversed with, and knew to be in health ! We are greatly alarmed. It costs us some pains to believe the fact,—as if that were incomprehensible and impossible which occurs so frequently in life—as if God, the Lord of life and death, ought to make an indulgent exception to the common course of events in favour of ourselves, and every thing connected with us.

What alarms us, then ? It seems shocking,

that the man, contrary to his expectations, and without any preparation, hastily torn away in the midst of his plans and projects—is placed in another world. We put ourselves in the situation of the deceased person, and feel his dumb horror after the violent change with which he has been transported from his daily works to an unknown eternity. It shocks us to think of such a separation from his family, without bidding them farewell,—without the least pressure of the hand of friendship.

Very different are our feelings at the sight of him who is a long while declining, and whose illness can only end with certain death. It is true, we are more prepared for the sorrow we have to suffer ; but yet, even at the least appearance of amendment, some hope that the disease may not be fatal awakes and springs up within us. We hope so much the more readily, so much the more fervently, as the person with whose loss we are threatened is dearer to us. His death throws us into sorrow no less deep, notwithstanding we had been prepared for the event. The sick person, indeed, seldom suffers so severely as we figure to ourselves in an over-heated, self-tormenting imagination ; but who can see his formerly blooming, now debilitated figure, his pale cheeks, his languid, sunken eyes, without being affected with the warmest sympathy ? Who can hear the groans, the sighs, the quick,

languid, hard drawing of the breath, without wishing: ' May the God of Mercy soon end this state, and give peace to the sufferer in the sleep of death—since this is now inevitable!'

Thus does a sudden death alarm us—thus pains us the sight of one who is dying by degrees.

Which is then the most desirable,—if wishes would avail, when the end of all hopes and wishes is at hand?—*Is a sudden or a lingering death to be preferred?*

In truth, this question appears at first sight fruitless; as our wishes with regard to what shall come to pass, cannot determine it. But notwithstanding this, the occupation of the mind on this subject is very attractive, and the consideration of it becomes useful and beneficial, if it remove the many prejudices which we may have entertained respecting it.

For are there not, in fact, many persons who hold a sudden death to be the greatest of all evils, because they suppose, that whoever suffers it in the midst of his sins, of which he has not had time to repent, is subjected to certain condemnation? Are there not many, who *for that reason* call on God in prayer to preserve them from sudden death?

But such a supposition is surely the fruit of an unworthy idea of the greatness and justice of God. For if, in fact, a sudden death were the most dread-

ful of all evils, how could God, whose children we all are—to whose pity and compassion we all lay claim—favour some men in this important matter (if it be so) and some not? If an earthquake, or an inundation suddenly deprive of life a hundred or a thousand men, are there not, probably, among them as many gross sinners as righteous men? If a sudden death were the worst of fates, would not the Almighty allow a difference to be made in the distribution of it? What advantage, then, have the millions who gradually expire on a sick-bed?

It is said, indeed: 'But the sinner has a respite given him on a death-bed to repent of his many failings, and to turn unto God.' Are we not, then, all sinners? And if repentance in the anguish of death can set all right with our spiritual concerns, would it not be contrary to the Divine paternal love, which embraces all with the same favour—who makes His sun to shine on the just and on the unjust—to refuse to many thousands the blessing which it grants to others? Would even an earthly father show such injustice to his children? No;—your representation of the Divine Being is defective, because you have an erroneous idea of the value of a death-bed repentance. If a malefactor repent in prison of his offences, and be filled with terror at the prospect of punishment, would you

hold him in the same estimation, and rank him with the uniformly pious and virtuous man? Would you, in the instance of a child who had long afflicted you with his disobedience, and wickedness of all kinds, if you wished to put an end to his misconduct, and resolved to execute on him the long-threatened punishment,—were he now through fear of that punishment to weep and repent—would you reward and endeavour to please him, as you would the docile, diligent child, who constantly fulfilled your wishes with the most tender and affectionate submission? Your sense of justice would rise up against it. How then can you regard the All-just as more unjust than yourself would be? How can a repentance of the moment, produced by anguish, be of equal worth with a whole life of virtue? Christ has himself warned us with the greatest earnestness against this error. It is not tears, nor words, nor prayers, that will avail—but the learning to do well, and the performing of works demonstrative of amendment. For, “*by their fruits shall ye know them,*” saith the Lord. “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*” (MATT. vii. 20, 21.)

Hence is a sudden death by no means to be feared as one of the most dreadful evils, merely

because it robs us of the opportunity and time to show signs of repentance, and to utter certain prayers. The Son of God does not teach that we should repent at the last moment of our life—but He says, ‘Whoever takes up his cross during his life and follows me, he is my disciple. Be ye perfect, even as your Heavenly Father is perfect.’ This perfection a man attains not when sickness enfeebles him, but through a perpetual struggle with his sinful propensities, and through sanctification by the Word and Spirit of Christ.

Although it be blamable for the sincere Christian under any circumstances to fear a sudden death, it is not less blamable to wish for a sudden death, out of mere cowardice. For, in fact, what else can it be than cowardice, and fear of the pain of a mortal sickness, of the prospect of death itself, that induces many to wish to be removed as speedily as possible? It requires greater courage to live in adversity, than to die suddenly. Therefore has the Divine Wisdom implanted the love of life, and the fear of death, so deeply in the human breast—that the cowardly weak part of the human race should not, when overcome by earthly difficulties, seek for rest too suddenly in the grave. For these inconveniences and sufferings are necessary to detach the spirit from sensual objects, and raise it to the apprehension of something higher,—but

the propensity to life is not less necessary. Without this bond, countries would be uncultivated, and the ends of Providence, as well as the designs of man, would remain unfulfilled.

Thus has the wise man—the true Christian—many reasons for considering a lingering as desirable as a sudden death,—but never cause to fear either the one or the other. For he knows the God who created him, and listens to the voice of the Lord which calls to us in the hour of death, and says, “*Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine.*” (ISAIAH xliii. 1.) Fear not for thy dissolution whether it take place soon or late—slowly, in the exhaustion of old age, or quickly, in the vigour and pride of life—instantaneously, in the field of battle—or suddenly, through some unexpected and extraordinary misfortune. For, in truth, you will be able to foresee your death, as a man in the evening foresees his sleep; but you will not know it when it arrives, any more than you know the moment when you sink into slumber. They who see you die, know it, and shudder at it. They shudder, because the love of life which God has implanted in all creatures, excites a dread of that which cuts them off from life. But you see not yourself die any more than you see yourself fall asleep. You see not your failing eye;

you are not alarmed at the paleness of your brow, nor at the coldness of your limbs, which fill the minds of those who see your death with gloomy images.

Fear not your dissolution, for you know who has redeemed you : it is Jesus Christ who has pointed out to you the way to heaven, and revealed the will of the Father—through a due performance of which, you render your spirit fit to enter into the glorious kingdom of your Lord. You know, when your hour is at hand, who hath called you by your name and said : “ *Thou art mine!*” It is the Almighty—the All-loving, who hath chosen you, not to endless destruction and misery, but to eternal happiness.

Therefore fear not, lest you should one day die a sudden death. Excessive and constant fear of death is unworthy, not only of the Christian,—but likewise of the heathen. For this useless self-torment is in itself more bitter than even death can be. It wearies the spirit—robs us of all capacity for happiness, which is the proper support of health and life, weakens the body, and accelerates the death which we desire to avoid. It is acknowledged that no poison more fatal to life can be found than grief or fear. Fear is itself deadly,—life-consuming. Whoever is incessantly in fear of death, dies incessantly, and suffers the pains of

death every day—when in the hour of death itself he will not even feel it.

Therefore cheer and divert yourself—employ the power of your imagination on totally different concerns. For it is only your imagination that is in fault, and represents objects of terror to you—not your rational convictions. Divert your thoughts, if they have a constant propensity to fix on the unpleasant matters, to which you have hitherto too much directed them. Each cheerful hour which you gain, is a medicine—a true prolonger of life.

Fear not death—even if your lot one day should be a sudden death. Who can know what end is impending over him? Who can foretell whether a conflagration, a stone from a roof, a wave, a bullet, a fit of apoplexy, or some other casualty may not destroy him? Therefore set your house in order,—preserve the utmost regularity in your domestic concerns, and matters of business; so that if you be suddenly cut off from the circle of your friends, they may find, after your death, every thing arranged with admirable method, without omission, without confusion. The praise of the living will then follow you—the blessing of your family will attend you beyond the grave. You have performed a most sacred duty towards those with whom you are connected by ties of blood. One may always suppose, that he who in his domestic concerns has kept proper

order, has also in his other more weighty affairs—his relations to God—avoided being overtaken unprepared for death. Live and act every day so that after your death—even if it take place in the next hour—your family may be without cause for grief, your name without reproach. For the good name of the deceased must always be a blissful inheritance for the surviving. Arrange your affairs always so that they may be disclosed to strange eyes at any time—as must always more or less be the case after your decease.

Set your house in order. Live piously, blamelessly, charitably, beneficently, without quarrelling or resentment—in all things like your Saviour Jesus, who taught you how to live. Then will a sudden death be for *you* only a sudden benefit. Why should you tremble to appear before God? Do you not constantly stand before Him? Are you not from your birth as one of His children, whom He embraces with the arms of His love, protects, and shelters? You tremble before His scrutinizing, His judging eye! It is true He knows your faults—but He knows also your earnest pains to put them away. He knows also your sincere efforts to amend—how often, in order to be more worthy of His grace, you have subdued your inclinations to sin—how often you have overcome and kept under your anger, your propensity to avarice

or sensuality—how often you have taken pains to repair a misdeed by better conduct. Should a child fear to go into the presence of a merciful father, even if he have not got rid of all his faults? Has not Jesus clearly revealed the infinite mercy of His Father and our Father? Has He not assured to us, upon our sincere repentance, His pity and forgiveness? Whoever walks before God at all times with *charitable, Christian feeling*, need not tremble before the Omnipresent; and a sudden death to *him* would be a sudden benefit. A rapid dissolution takes from death its bitterness. The view of weeping relatives and friends, and reflection on the grief of those who are at a distance, aggravates the pain of our separation from the world. And this is, to a tender heart, the most distressing accompaniment of death. Who, without deep distress, can see the sorrow of his family, however much they may endeavour to conceal it? Who can be tranquil when they approach him to press for the last time the hand of true affection? Who can be calm, when, with doleful lamentations, they surround our death-bed in prayer?

Even the many solemn preparations for the event of our decease; the anxious attention and eager listening of our friends to all our motions; all the circumstances which commonly encompass a dying

person, embitter the lest moments of life. Therefore doth God often send His beloved a speedy death. He withdraws them from the sad necessity of witnessing the fruitless, often the excessive, grief of those who remain behind.

Death itself—the actual falling asleep—is not bitter. It is not suffering—and cannot be so; because it is the end of all suffering—the point at which suffering has already ceased. Sickness is bitter; but sickness is not death—it only leads on slowly the approach of death. He whom God calls suddenly out of the world, is delivered from the agony of a sick-bed. He dies without having tasted of death. Between his earthly and heavenly life lies scarcely a single moment. Without care, without fear, without grief, he passes from his present existence to a better and more noble state, as a dreamer when he is roused from sleep, becomes clearly and instantly awake. He knows nothing of the contest between the desire of life and the power of death—in him there is no longing to continue with his friends—neither regret for that which he leaves behind, nor fearful expectation of that which is to come.

Yes; *to the sincere and righteous Christian* a sudden death is not to be regarded as a punishment sent from God, but as one of His greatest

benefits. Thus called He an Elias, an Enoch, to Himself.

Moreover, how can that ever be evil which proceeds from Thy hand—Thou who art ineffably good? Lord of Seraphim and worms—Lord of life and death! I am in Thy hand—do with me as Thou wilt! for whatever Thou dost is unquestionably for the best! When Thou calledst me out of nothing *into* this life, my happiness was Thy will: if Thou call me *from* this life, shall my happiness be less Thy will? No, no! Thou art “LOVE”—whoever remains in love, will remain in Thee, O God, and Thou in him. Thou, Lord, art my light and my salvation—wherefore should I fear? Thou, Lord, art the strength of my life—of what should I be afraid?

XXXII.

IS A LINGERING OR A SUDDEN DEATH TO BE PREFERRED?

PART II.

JEREMIAH xxxi. 25.

*"For I have satiated the weary soul, and have replenished every
sorrowful soul."*

ALTHOUGH there may be many men, who, if they had their own free choice, would prefer to die at once, suddenly, without tasting the bitterness of death,—yet there are, surely, still more whose wish it is—even if they suffer under a long and severe illness—that they may be able to prepare for the arrival of their last hour. The greater number of men, also, die in this way: and only a few are suddenly cut off by unexpected accident.

The sweetest of all deaths is, indisputably, that of advanced, godly, and venerable old age, in which, when all the powers are gradually exhausted, the love of life is extinguished, and the spirit longs after a better state of existence. Then

is life like a waning light, which beams, though faintly, till the last drop of oil is totally consumed.

To die the sweet death of a peaceful old age,—to fall asleep amidst pious children and grandchildren, from mere debility, is indeed the secret or avowed wish of every man. It is seldom fulfilled. Seldom, because few men understand how to lay the foundation in their early days of a healthy and happy old age. Most manage ill, either in their youthful or maturer years, the strength of constitution which God has granted them. They consume too much of it, often in excessive work,—often in the lap of sensuality,—often by imprudently neglecting the care of their health,—often through the violence of the passions to which they yield themselves. Nothing wears away human strength more quickly than passion, or the unhappy inclination to anger, hatred, envy, and sensual appetites. Nothing leads more certainly to great old age, than tranquil equanimity in good or bad fortune,—the never feeling to excess either fear or joy. It is partly this waste of the powers of life—partly an inward hereditary tendency to one complaint or another—partly the causes of mortal diseases, which we imbibe from infection, or weather, or other circumstances;—which brings us in general sooner than we wish or expect to a death-bed.

It is, however, unreasonable that a man should fear, during his illness, to contemplate his certain death. It is true, that disease itself has sometimes, perhaps, its painful moments. But yet we know that bodily pains of every kind have a certain measure which they never can exceed. They may continue ; but then they can never be of excessive intensity. When they reach the highest degree, they are lost in stupefaction—in which nothing is felt. It requires not always a mortal illness to produce grievous pain. How much have men suffered through the crushing or maiming of their limbs, whilst they remained otherwise in perfect health—far greater suffering than a mortal illness usually occasions. Notwithstanding that, they endured such misfortunes often with wonderful heroism. Yes,—most diseases which are commonly dreadful to the spectator, on account of the bodily convulsions that attend them, are to the sick man himself but slightly painful. There are, likewise, many invalids who would endure courageously and patiently the most acute diseases, if they could entertain any certain hope of their recovery:—a proof that their unhealthy, often fatal state, is not extremely painful to them. Such a state becomes burdensome and intolerable, less through itself, than through the disposition of the suffering person. God lays not more on any one than he is

able to bear ; but man often increases his own burden by impatience, peevishness, fearfulness, and effeminacy. Not the corporeal sickness, but the sickness of the soul, is always the heavier.

A man who possesses the *heroism of Christian wisdom* bears even sickness calmly. He finds it comparatively light. He knows what the Lord has said ; “ *I have satiated the weary soul, and have replenished every sorrowful soul.*” (JEREMIAH xxxi. 25.)

The death which we foresee on a death-bed, has one important ground of preference over a sudden death. If this latter be sometimes a benefit received from the hand of God—and our Heavenly Father always knows what is best—what is best for each—yet is a gradual dissolution perhaps a still greater mercy. If a man be ever so careful and orderly, even at all times, in the affairs of life, he will yet before he is separated for ever from his family have much to regulate ; in order not to leave behind any confusion, misunderstanding and unpleasant matters, by which, sometimes his rightful property, sometimes his good name, may be endangered. Who is so regular every day in his domestic affairs, that he can at any time enter upon a long journey without inconvenience to his family ? A sickness which lays us down, perhaps without hope of recovery, warns us, above all things, to

set our house in order. For this purpose God is willing to grant us some respite, which may be advantageous to our families. Who can meet death with peace if he have not provided for his children—given every one his due with strict conscientiousness—and taken precautions that no one after his death shall be involved in difficulty or contention? It matters little whether we bequeath our family a large fortune—for it is not every one who has been in a condition to acquire it—but it is of great importance that honour shall attach to the name of the deceased. We must do as much as we can—God provides for the rest,—for that which we could not do. He is the Father of our family. It is already a proof that He will do so, that He has granted us time, even at the approach of death, to restore what belongs to others—to make a testamentary settlement of what belongs to ourselves, in which, if we have it in our power, we may recollect not only our nearest relatives, but also those domestics who have served us long and faithfully—not only our domestics, but also public institutions, which contribute to the common advantage of society. Upon a death-bed will our patriotism give to our native land strong proof of its sincerity.

For this reason, also, is a death, which is not very sudden, to be considered as one of the greatest favours of God—because we gain time by it to

prepare our friends for our departure. They will be less alarmed, less hurt, than if we were suddenly snatched from them. Their grief may yet be great; but we bear with more fortitude things which are foreseen—we listen more readily to the voice of consolation. How carefully did Jesus prepare His disciples beforehand, when He was going to meet an ignominious death! What a sublime example has He left us!

Moreover, every man has had, probably, in the course of his life some useful projects which have been delayed on account of other circumstances. God prevents a hasty death from snatching him away. He receives a respite, that he may yet accomplish much good, and adorn the termination of his earthly existence with some noble actions. How can any one breathe out his soul more happily, than with the consciousness of having acted in a godlike manner in his last moments?

And even if we be not rich enough to be bountiful with our dying hand, and to do all the good we should wish with the appropriation of our fortune—must we always be rich, in order to do good? Is not often a single wise word more consolatory, more effective, more salutary, than a ton of gold—especially a word spoken on a death-bed by expiring lips! Yes; the death-bed is a pulpit of eloquence, from which no sigh, no hint,

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is uttered in vain. And he who speaks from thence is heard with reverence, faith, and love. He appears, on the threshold of life, before the open gate of eternity, to have become quite another man. Truth dwells in the mouth of the dying. A sudden death robs us of these advantages. And an advantage *that* may well be called, if we can draw down a blessing on our last hours, before our passage to another life. Thus does the setting sun, before it departs, shine yet once more gloriously over all the fields, which during his daily course he had refreshed with light and warmth. Then may we turn away tranquilly from the earth towards the realms beyond the grave. Then, after having completed our day's work, may we expect the promise of the Lord, that He will satiate the weary soul.

For the faithful Christian—the good, the godly man—the truly wise one,—death itself has throughout nothing terrific ; but least of all in the moment when his spirit separates from its earthly covering. It has been a real enjoyment to many dying persons, to consider, intently, the disengagement of their spirit from the dust. They have distinctly expected this—especially when they lay in sickness, which afforded them an undisturbed opportunity for self-contemplation. Very far from this state being a terror to them, as they might have feared in their days of health—they are, on the contrary, more

peaceful, more sober-minded. The world and the affairs of life appear to them worthless, when compared with the sublime state into which they feel themselves wonderfully transferred.

The commencement of death is with man the actual beginning of a higher condition of mind; and the spirit, therefore, stands more elevated at such moments, because the paralyzing weight of the earthly body is gradually removed from it. It becomes free; it appears to itself to possess unwonted strength and greatness. People have often before their dissolution some lucid moments,—such as to render them able and willing to communicate freely and serenely to the bystanders. But they themselves cannot make known how they obtain this insight. Their powers have begun to improve in an astonishing manner and degree. They see the long obscured past—that which they appear to have forgotten in the days of health, or of which they had only a faint recollection, again clear and distinct before them. Others speak of future things; and these come to be fulfilled. The situation of a dying man has been compared with that of ecstasy, or with a light which burns with a brighter flame just before it is extinguished. There is already in death an obvious exaltation of the spirit. It casts off the heavy bonds of the body—it becomes angelic. Far from passing into unconsciousness and

sleep, it seems to pass into the clearest, most perspicuous self-consciousness.

Common sleep has often been called the brother of death; but a very erroneous idea has thereby been introduced. We think of sleep as of unconsciousness,—because we cannot remember, when we awake, what the spirit thought during the slumber of the body. But the spirit possesses perpetual consciousness—it lives a double kind of life—the one with the body—the other independently of the body. The life which it lives with the body, that is, with the open senses—of *that* it has a remembrance with open senses, or when awake. On the contrary, that which it lives with closed senses, or in sleep, independently of the body,—of *that* it has no recollection in waking, or at any rate only a dark apprehension from dreams, into which it passes when it resumes in a small degree its action and connexion with the organs of the body.

In the state in which it lives exclusively for itself, independent of the body, with the senses closed up,—it remembers as well all the things which it has done waking, as those which it experienced in its independent state. Here it enjoys, as it were, the fruit of its double existence. Of ourselves we cannot readily perceive this, because when awake, we bear the single life of sense and body, and at that time can form no idea of an independent state

of the spirit. But yet on the boundary of two states—where the life of sense and the independent existence of the spirit are mingled,—as in dreams—we discover the traces of this double existence. Thus we sometimes remember in dreams previous transactions, the image of which we were incapable of recalling while awake:—a proof of the activity of the spirit, in moments of which, waking, we know no more. Thus it happens that there are frequent occasions on which we might say to ourselves: ‘How is all this—has not that which is now coming to pass happened once before? Have I not already experienced it?’ We are so sure of this, that we often know in a moment, from what a man now says, what he will speak and do—because it appears to us to have already taken place once before. Yet is this no repetition of an active waking experience—but clearly an excited recollection of the employment of the spirit during its independent existence. It goes at those times, as it were, from hence, disporting in the future. For, when it was independent of the senses of the body, there was no separation between it and the future. Waking we have only a faint and rare recollection of the act of the spirit in its independent state. Very surprising, considered in itself, is the fact that we recognize the wonderful sublimity of the spirit, and its self-

consciousness in such sick people as are of weak nerves ; or in the instances of those who walk and talk in their sleep. They remember in such situations all similar things which have occurred before ; and at the same time all that they had done when awake. But as soon as their spirit enters again into close connexion with the open senses, they remember no longer accurately what they were and did in sleep. They would believe—now that they are awake—that they had been without consciousness in sleep, if we did not inform them to the contrary. The spirit is never unconscious, whether the body sleep or wake. Moreover, we know from frequent observation of the sick persons just described, that the spirit during its independent state, has an inexplicable power. It needs not the outward senses to perceive what is present and comes to pass. It seems to know, in a manner unaccountable to us, both men and beasts—and their peculiar qualities,—even the actions and occupations of distant persons, whom in their waking state they had never seen or known.

Into this freedom from the heavy life of the senses, the immortal spirit enters again at the total decease of the body. Therefore is the commencement of dissolution an exaltation of its condition,—a glorious emancipation. Hence the peace of the dying man, when at length he enters on these

wonderfully delightful moments. They must, surely, be inexpressibly sweet ! One often sees in the features of dead persons, some hours after their decease, still a marvellously happy and tranquil smile, like the last faint testimony of their blissful state. One fancies that one reads in their countenance how the word of the Lord has been fulfilled in them : *“ I have satiated every weary soul, and have replenished every sorrowful soul.”*

Thus is death *to the* RIGHTeous any thing but terrible. It is a heavenly moment, in which the spirit obtains its proper freedom and dignity. Of the life which it has lived previously on earth, it will then remember much that it was incapable of recollecting so long as it bore the overwhelming burden of earthly senses—which it was compelled to bear, because it was human.

And thus does the significant expression of Jesus become clear and intelligible to me : *“ Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me : for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”* (JOHN xvii. 24.) Yes ; it is a restoration to the beloved—a recognition of them after separation. If there be already on earth, as has been sometimes imagined, situations in which the spirit of man, partly freed from the body—from its dazzling senses—is capable, through

its own bare will, of perceiving persons strange to it, in foreign countries—it may certainly be supposed to have still greater powers when every tie is broken.

O God, my Father, wilt Thou also “satisfy” *my* “weary soul?” I will not tremble any more for the hour of dissolution—I will await it with that tranquillity, with that happy confidence, which Jesus has imparted to me—Jesus, the conqueror of the king of terrors—with that serenity which Thine infinite goodness and mercy encourage me to feel. Oh the transport! when all that I have lost shall be again restored to me in the holy, glorious life, to which Thou hast ordained me!—when after a short separation, I shall find again all that was dearest to my soul.

Hallelujah, Hallelujah! Praised be God—the unutterably glorious—the unutterably merciful Jehovah. Hallelujah to the all-loving Father of spirits,—of spirits which He refreshes and enlightens in the hour of death. Praised be the Eternal, the Source of light and blessedness, from world to world, thenceforth throughout eternity. Amen.

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XXXIII.

ON APPARITIONS OF THE DEAD.

LUKE xxiv. 36—39.

“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”

WHETHER the souls of deceased persons can give any signs of their existence to their friends or enemies,—whether they can appear again to us, through the senses of seeing, hearing, and feeling—or not—is no principle of Christian doctrine; and consequently, as regards religion, perhaps quite indifferent. Hence every one follows his own opinions on this point without incurring blame. Many believe that they have grounds for admitting the existence of ghosts and apparitions, and forebodings of absent or deceased friends—many reject it as a groundless imagination.

Since the religion of Jesus Christ—the words and doctrines of our Lord himself, which he delivered during his earthly life—give us no elucidation of the real *condition of the spiritual kingdom*, and no precise information with respect to the state and being of the soul after the death of the body—but, at most, only hint what the soul beyond the grave shall *not* be, and what it will *not* do—all endeavours must be fruitless to draw back the vail from the mysterious future. We lose ourselves, when we make such inquiries, in dark speculations without basis or certainty; and our meditations are nothing more, at last, than the unprofitable sport of a vain curiosity.

Had the wisdom of God conceived it beneficial to the welfare and peace of man, to acquaint him with the actual circumstances and relations of the spiritual kingdom—then it is not to be doubted, but that they would have been made known in the most clear and incontrovertible manner. We should have received divine communications on the subject—we should possess a revelation which no living man would be capable of disputing. For without a particular revelation, no knowledge of the state of departed souls is to be attained. The bare human intellect is a light too faintly glimmering to enlighten the darkness which obscures the moral horizon after the hour of death.

If, therefore, poor short-sighted mortals, infatuated with their foolish imaginations, pretend to give us intelligence of the spiritual kingdom—information as to the condition of the soul after death,—if short-sighted mortals take upon themselves to furnish us with light and explanation upon that obscure point, respecting which Jesus Christ himself—not without purpose—was entirely silent, and whereof no divine revelation has ever been granted to the children of men;—then, doubt not, that those people who presume to do more than Jesus our Saviour did, set before us, instead of sacred truth, mere empty fanaticism; and, instead of a heavenly *revelation*, merely their own conceits. Holy Scripture itself warns them against their folly; against their imaginations; against their suppositions; against their fictions and fables concerning the state of the soul after death,—apparitions—unriddling of things beyond the grave—investigations of the future,—and the like. (1 TIM. iv. 7.)

However indifferent, indeed, may be the belief or disbelief of the re-appearance of the deceased in respect to religion itself—which has expressly determined nothing on the subject—yet it is not entirely indifferent, inasmuch as the belief or denial of the appearance of spirits may have great influence on the health of our bodies and our souls.

It is remarkable in fact, that the appearance of departed souls should have been believed in the oldest times,—but always, moreover, only among people who were notorious for their ignorance and superstition. It is no less remarkable, that even in these days, many men still believe in the appearance of spectres; but always those only who are little instructed, superstitious, or of weak nerves and sickly; or such persons as possess a very lively enthusiastical fancy, disposed to all kinds of singular imaginations. On the other hand, the wisest, best instructed, most sound and intrepid persons, never know any thing about it.

It requires only a little reflection to be soon convinced that one could learn to believe in apparitions of the dead; and that one could fall into this belief without ever having seen a departed spirit. For how must mortals, who have received no light from above, conclude,—how must it affect their mind,—when they see the corpse of a well-known friend? They cannot, though he lie already in the grave, bring themselves to believe him lost. They suppose he must yet be with them: their heated imagination presents his image, in a lively manner, before them. They persuade themselves, in their fears, that they have seen him; and as they know his body to be in the grave, they must think that his spirit has the power of appearing to

them. In the day-time every one is courageous, and without fears,—but in the evening, or at night, when our body is already relaxed, and the soul is weary, the power of imagination is greater, and every nerve is more sensitive and irritable. When the darkness still more favours the play of the imagination, then the weak mortal fears things, which, in the day-light, he would have laughed at. Hence it is sufficiently evident, why the terrible appearances which are recounted should, for the most part, have been seen only in the dark, and at night. Hence even children, who never heard of ghosts, are affrighted by very common things, which in the darkness of the night assume a strange form, and by the broad light are well known objects.

Thus arises all error in the world,—for error is belief in things which do not exist.

Whether apparitions of departed souls actually exist or not, at least they would be very desirable for many persons. If to the weeping mother, her affectionate smiling child should appear—the child which she had lost by death ; if to the loving husband the spirit of his glorified wife should bring consolation from the heavenly regions to his wounded heart ;—Ah, if a connexion, an intercourse with the departed object of affection, were possible,—if the earthly life could be so united to

the hitherto veiled eternal,—and the dust could come in contact with the spirit,—if all this were so, what a sublime condition would it be for man ! Alas ! we must do without it. We are not yet worthy of such a state. Dust is dust—and the spirit dwells in more glorious relations. I will not ask whether the appearance of departed souls be possible ; for many things may be very possible, which have not, for that reason, ever occurred on earth. I should wander, like a thousand others, in fruitless conjectures ; and should come out of the labyrinth of my thoughts still more discontented than I entered it.

But I will ask : ‘ Do appearances of the dead actually exist ? ’ Who can answer here ? Who will instruct us with any certainty in this matter ? There are only three teachers, who can communicate to me the information I desire : *Jesus Christ, Reason*—that reason through which God declares His will even to the Heathen—and *Experience*.

In the first place—I find in the history of the life of the Divine Saviour wonderful appearances, which are inexplicable. I see Him in the company of angels—I see Him, as did His disciples, James and Peter and John, who accompanied Him on the Mount, *in the brightness of His transfiguration*, and two venerable men of former days—men whom no mortal eye had seen to die, Moses and Elias,

by His side in conversation with Him. I hear *a voice from heaven which cries : ‘ This is my beloved Son ; hear ye Him.’* (MARK ix. 2—9). I see a *heavenly apparition* watching at His grave—I see Him who died on the cross and was buried, again *alive* among His followers—going about as one triumphantly *risen from the tomb*.

What shall these wonderful circumstances in the life of Jesus teach me ? Nothing less, than that Jesus is the GOD-MAN, who by means of His exalted nature dwells in loftier habitations—to which no weak mortal either before or after Him has reached. He who commanded the raging storm and the boisterous sea to be still,—and the waters obeyed ; He who fed thousands in the desert ; and who gave distinct sight to the man born blind, by a single word—He was a higher, a more *Godlike person than I or any other mortal*.

Dare I presume to place myself in the rank of the incarnate God ? Dare I suppose that heaven and earth will be submissive to my beck, as they were at His ? Dare I dream that my hand can work miracles, like the hand of the Most Divine ? Dare I believe, that I stand with God and Eternity, with the living and the souls of the dead, in such incomprehensibly near and mysterious contact as the Son of God ?

No ;—those appearances on which I look with

astonishment in the history of the life of Jesus, belong only to the Immanuel :—they do not prove that every mortal can have similar visions. Ah ! how low do we stand beneath the Lord of glory ! How vain, how proud is the supposition, that I, like Him, could be in association with the world of spirits—that what is a manifestation of glory in His divine life, should be a daily occurrence—that it should happen to every one, even the unworthy ?

Jesus Himself warns His disciples against the false idea, that, as men, they could come into nearer connexion with the world of spirits. As He once walked on the waves of the sea towards them, they cried out for fear : ‘ It is an apparition ! ’ He blamed their groundless terror—they were not yet matured in judgment and understanding, though they had witnessed the miracles of the loaves ; for their hearts were hardened—biassed by Jewish superstitions. (MATT. vi. 52.)

Jesus blamed His disciples when He stood in the midst of them after His resurrection ; and they were affrighted at His appearing after His crucifixion and death, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. “ *Feel me and see,* ” said He, “ *for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.* ” (LUKE xxiv. 39). A spirit, or the soul of a deceased person, has nothing earthly about it,—says Jesus here expressly : Therefore, we cannot see and feel it.

What appears to our eyes, our ears, and our feelings, is always something earthly—nothing spiritual. But the soul casts off, after the death of the body, every thing earthly, which perishes in the grave ;—therefore, is the soul invisible to our eyes, inaudible to our ears.

Then will not I, a mere mortal, fancy myself wiser than Jesus, my Divine Instructor. I will believe, as He has taught His own disciples. I am persuaded that no man can see or feel any thing spiritual—but that what he sees and feels is always something earthly and corporeal. Consequently the soul of a departed person cannot appear to me or to any one in this life, because I can neither see, nor hear, nor feel the soul, as such.

If we will have it, that a departed spirit should appear, then must it put on a new body—its new body would also be quite distinct from that which lies corrupting in the grave—consequently, I should not know the apparition as being a strange figure ; and its appearance were, as far as regards me, altogether useless. But where do we find in Holy Scripture, that God gives again to souls, immediately after death, a new body, similar to the former in figure and in features ? Nowhere do the Scriptures say it. If therefore, notwithstanding, men affirm and teach this, their doctrine is a phantom ; and they set themselves down with their pretended

relations, of which God's word knows nothing in the contemptible class of false teachers and pitiable enthusiasts.

But secondly—Reason is in perfect harmony with the convincing words of Jesus. As soon as the reasoning faculty is awake—that is—as soon as men begin to reflect quietly and without previous bias, they reject the empty imaginations of ghosts and ectres as old wives' fables, against which St. Paul warns his disciple Timothy. Then they perceive the senselessness and folly of these imaginations, and call them with justice a superstition which promotes the dignity of the Supreme Being.

For what idea should I form to myself of the finite wisdom of God, if I were to believe that He has given no higher occupation to the soul after death, than now and then at night to frighten perhaps an old fearful person, or a poor ignorant one? Now!—has not the immortal soul a more weighty employment beyond the grave, than to be a bugbear and frightful image to silly mortals? Such representations, absurd as they are, are not less unworthy of the Godhead—the all-loving, the all-wisely-ordaining Divinity. No; our heavenly Father does not share our folly with us. He wills that we acknowledge Him in His supreme wisdom. Surely He appoints the souls of the deceased to a more important sphere of action, than to do nightly

mischief, and to haunt the world—as the ignorant, tormenting themselves with their own imaginations, are apt to fancy.

Moreover, all the narratives of apparitions reported as true, are in themselves full of folly. The inventors of these tales saw, according to their imagination, the separate soul not only in a new body, but also in new clothing, after the fashion of the country as the workman makes it.—Nobody has ever yet seen a naked ghost. If, now, the souls of men can become visible, have these souls earthly garments in which to appear? or who makes the clothing for souls after death, according to the form and colour which the deceased was accustomed to wear?

But enough of this foolish nonsense—I may not dwell any longer on the consideration of it. It disturbs the dignity and sanctity of my devotion, which I consecrate only to the most serious and sublime objects.

I should also—in the third place—consult Experience, whether it will bear witness to the appearance of souls after death. But can experience ever testify otherwise than as Jesus Himself spoke, and as reason speaks? It is only ignorant and rude—only nervous or timorous persons—only people with a very active power of imagination who have, time out of mind, been influenced by fables and

tales of apparitions and spirits ;—never discriminating, experienced, and intelligent men.

Far be then from me the unchristian belief which conflicts with the declaration of my Saviour—the belief in apparitions of the dead, in ghosts, in goblins, in seducing spirits, infernal spirits—and whatever names may be given to those inventions and bugbears of heated imaginations. Far be from me the unchristian belief, which, like the superstitions of the common people of the Jews, when they were converted to Christianity, passed with them into this Religion.

It is not sufficient that we keep ourselves free from these false imaginations, which too nearly affect the dignity of God : we must endeavour, likewise, to keep our tender children free from such delusions—because children, through the weakness of their understanding and the vivacity of their imagination, have a great pleasure in such tales. We should be extremely cautious that they should not be made afraid, by ignorant and often superstitious servants, of apparitions, which never are, nor can be, seen. That timidity which works much evil on their tender nerves, will infallibly be to them a source of many bitter hours.

Thy doctrine will I guard, O Thou Divine Teacher, Jesus—and faith in Thy word. For, as Thou once wast angry with Thy disciples for their

superstitious fear—so it is now the duty of the true Christian to abolish superstition wherever he finds it—that all may become more wise, free, fearless, veracious, and pure,—and loosing themselves from the bonds of error, may rise in the spirit to Thee—Thou Eternal Spirit of truth, of light and life !

Thou desirest only love from us—Thou God of love !—and not slavish fear. Thou wilt not that we should be alarmed with the spirits of those whom Thou hast commanded us to love in this world. Thou hast, O Eternal, from everlasting, ordained our lot, and our way is determined and prepared when we separate, in death, from our earthly covering. Well—Thou dost beckon, and our souls will hasten thither—but Thou dost not beckon them to perdition.

Thou hast Thyself covered the prospect of eternity with an impenetrable vail. I will not, with rash and fruitless anxiety seek to lift this vail. It is only beneficial to me that I know not—what I should not know. Death will at some future time, benignantly raise the curtain which now hangs before me. I shall see the wonders of eternity—I shall be united to Thee—to all who were dear to me, and holy here below. I shall behold Thee, my God !

XXXIV.
THE SICK MAN.

MATTHEW XXV. 36.

"I was sick, and ye visited me."

AMONG the manifold misfortunes of human life, the loss of health is one of the most severe. All earthly fortune is trifling in comparison with the sufferings of the sick man. Give him every thing, and take not from him his life : he will have lost the half of the world. Lay him on a silken couch ; he will groan under the severity of his pains ; whilst the poor beggar, with the blessing of health, slumbers peacefully on the hard earth. Fill his table with the most costly food ; he will thrust it back, and envy the indigent who eats his black bread with appetite. Surround him with the pomp of kings ; let his seat be a throne, his crutch a sceptre, he will turn away his eyes with indifference and disdain from marble, gold, and purple ; and would think himself happy if he could enjoy the health of the meanest of his servants, under the thatched roof of the hardy peasant.

Hence is the sight of a sick person at all times a painful sight. No one sees without sympathy, without emotion, the pale cheek, the dull look, the sunken frame of the patient. Even the wild warrior moderates in his presence the intoxication of rage, and spares the unhappy man.

To the Christian, the sick person is an object worthy of respect. He should be so. Levity herself becomes serious by the side of a sick-bed.

Perhaps you yourself were once such an object of compassion ;—then think of your days of pain. You have gathered great and bitter experience. Go with me, in idea, to the sick-bed of a lingering fellow-creature, and refresh the thoughts and resolutions which you entertained at the time of your own illness.

And if you have never lost your health, the day may come when you lose it unexpectedly. Prepare yourself like a wise man for this time of trial. Learn to respect the sick, and to nurse him with assiduous love—in order that you may at some future time be respected and nursed like him.

Sicknesses are not necessarily connected with life. Man was originally created perfect in all respects. Thousands live to the end of their days without having experienced any material derangement of the bodily constitution. It is no sickness which kills them. They die, because the last drop

of the oil of life has burnt out in their lamps ; they fall asleep in gentle weariness, like the reaper in Autumn, after his day's fatiguing work.

If we have not already inherited the germ of a disease from our parents—then is it commonly only our own carelessness or want of thought which destroys that fair gift of heaven, the health of our body ; and ruins the organ of the soul, through which it might have been usefully employed.

In every case, observe the natural constitution of your body, and act accordingly. Suitably to this regulate your food, your drink, your pleasures, and the way in which you pursue your calling. Forget not that a single hour of intemperance may be the parent of painful years ; forget not that a moment of ruinous thoughtlessness in the midst of enjoyment, may pour a deadly poison into the goblet of your pleasure.

The body is not a man's property—it is only a loan from the hand of God, which we must return,—an organ of the spirit, without which the spirit cannot perform the duty imposed on it upon earth. If a man deserve punishment on account of sin—he is surely the most deserving of it, who sins against his own body : for he robs himself for a long time, perhaps for ever, of the happiness of life, and the means of doing as much good as he might have done.

It is not only that, through our thoughtlessness, we injure our health, and render ourselves incapable of performing our duties to God, our country, fellow-citizens, strangers and friends; we may, even if to all appearance we are perfectly cured, hasten thereby the approach of the hour of our death. He who is immoderate—both he who, in adventurous pride, throws himself into needless danger, as well as he who extravagantly pampers his corporeal appetites—is, against his will and intention, a suicide.

Yet more—the germ of disease is often handed down from the parents to the children—their weaknesses again become the weaknesses and sufferings of succeeding generations. Therefore, guard with attention the health of your body, that your children may never, in sorrow, reproach you for their sickly bodies; that the foolishness of one of the minutes of your life be not the bane of your descendants! This it is which the Scripture means when it says—that the sins of the parents shall be visited even on the third and fourth generation.

Often turn, in spirit, to the couch of the sick man. It is a school of wisdom for you. When the hollow eye and deathlike paleness of the invalid make you shudder, your determination to avoid every thing which may destroy your own health will become the stronger.

Yet take care not only of yourself—take care also of the health of your friend. Mislead no other person into intemperate pleasure, or any excesses, from which maladies arise. What triumph can it be to you, to rob him of the beauteous blossoms of health? to become the destroyer of his life? Ah! very good men frequently fail in this particular, without any wicked design, without intending it—even in the Temple of pleasure! Their example and encouragement entice the weaker to an intemperate exertion. They often mean to give to a friend the highest proof of their attachment, in the very thing in which they poison and destroy him. The wickedness and cruelty of men are not so much to be dreaded, as their foolish levity.

Reverence, O Christian, in yourself, as well as in others, the sacredness of health. Practise the ennobling duties of humanity towards the sick.

Be the friend of the sick, as Jesus was,—He who is the best pattern for our conduct. Did He not go with a healing hand to the bed of the dying? Was it not He who lovingly took care of the lame and the blind, the leper and the palsied? Was He not the refuge of the unhappy? Did they not cause themselves to be carried to Him when they heard that the Divine Friend of suffering humanity was near? My dear Christian—be a Christian! Disciple of Jesus—be as your Lord!

Your hand, indeed, cannot perform *miracles*—but it can still do *good*—your arm raises not the hopeless into the blooming ranks of the healthy—it does not ward off death—but you can kindly support the weak. At your word, indeed, all the pains of the sufferer depart not from him—but your word may give consolation and counsel and joy to a wretched man, to whom every thing—even health—is wanting.

“*I was sick, and ye visited me not!*” will Jesus one day say to those who have unkindly left the sick without the tender attention which they needed.

Lend your aid, especially, to the sick who are poor and strangers! The native has help from his weeping friends. The rich has all the assistance he requires. Since every one will readily serve him, and he can procure for himself whatever is necessary, to improve his situation, or can relieve his disorder. But who attends the poor man? Perhaps only a hard-hearted hireling. Who fosters the languishing stranger? Alas! perhaps no one—whilst his far distant relatives mourn his absence. You often desire to do good. You perhaps think, that you have done enough if you have charitably given alms to a beggar in the street. Ah! how little is all this! God has shewn towards you more than this petty charity; and yet how frail, how

poor did you enter into the world ! Go, and give more than this slender alms. Remember what Jesus saith : “ *Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* ” (MATT. XXV. 40.)

Go seek the hovel of the poor and miserable, and behold there the hungry father or the languishing mother upon the hard bed of sickness, without help, without advice, without physician or medicine, surrounded by despairing children :—there is your post of honour—there is the field where you may sow noble and fruitful seed—there is your road to glory. Whether you are richly or scantily blessed by God with earthly goods, search out the poor families in your neighbourhood ; enquire how they live ; enquire if any one of them be sick—then be you their ministering angel !

Often is the charity which you give to common beggars in the street only a support of their indolence, an encouragement of their negligence, and an aid to their irregularity. But could you see the interior of many a poor household with your own eyes, those eyes would sorely weep. You would be astonished how, in the near neighbourhood of a splendid and expensive palace, a needy hut should contain so much unutterable misery. You would shudder to think that in a town inhabited by Christians, so much distress could remain with-

out relief,—that so much wretchedness should continue unknown amid happy thousands. If the sick Lazarus lie not always, in the present day, full of sores before the rich man's house, to satisfy himself with the crumbs which fall from the luxurious table, he lies in a neighbouring dwelling, and no one hears his groans—except the OMNIPRESENT God.

Assist the sick poor man and stranger by benevolent institutions, when you can. It was one of the most praiseworthy habits of our forefathers, that, being blessed by God with prosperity, they appropriated a part of their riches to pious and charitable institutions. God gave them abundance—they gratefully gave it back again, in salutary establishments, to God. Their pious heart, which called God the Father of all, was open to the love of their poorer brethren; and in those days, the poor often stood among the number of their heirs.

In many countries this excellent Christian-like custom is now rare—in many it is become entirely unknown. Our fathers died : thousands of sick, who, through their beneficence, have been provided for in public pious institutions, still bless their unknown and long-departed benefactors. Will, one day, others in like manner bless *our* name ? On those marble monuments, which many

of you, rich ones of the earth, cause to be erected over your graves, posterity will look with contemptuous indifference. It will only deride the fruitless vanity with which you carry your ostentation even into death. One single warm tear of thankfulness and joy, shed by the sick man who, after your decease, has received alleviating assistance through your considerate beneficence, will be more valuable than the cold tear which the chisel of the artist has wrought upon the marble statues of your tomb. God numbers the former tears—the latter are but dust, and the prey of time.

Let us return to the good customs of our fathers,—let us, upon our sick bed, think on those helpless beings who could have had no nursing like ourselves; and let us help to still their pains, since the hand of God has already soothed our own.

Regard especially the mental sufferings of your sick fellow-creature. If you were once his enemy, go reconcile yourself to him without delay. If he have offended you, forgive him, that he may part from you and live with a tranquil mind: if, perchance, he be justly angry with you, go and intreat him to forgive you. Let no one part from you in anger. In eternity, there should be no being who can make a complaint against you.

Sooner or later, you yourself will sink down debilitated on a sick couch. No balm, no medi-

cine, will then so much revive you, as the blessed thought, that no one is angry with you—that many a pious heart puts forth for you a sigh, a sorrowful sigh—but not one a curse! In the hour of pain, then, exalt your Christianity by patience, by pious resignation to the will of your Creator—who has guided you hitherto, and who will still guide you yonder as well as here. Then exalt your faith in God's providence by peaceful trust and resignation, and joyful courage. Do not wish for death, but do not dread its slumber. Millions have died before you—millions will die after you. This is the divine law in the administration of the world—it is for the benefit of the world. You have already often died. As often as you have fallen asleep, you have experienced death. What more is it, then, if you fall into a slumber for the last time? *You*, in fact, will not slumber. No,—it is only your body—your soul falls not asleep in death; it awakes with God; it lives with God; it soars to higher connexions, and smiles at its former cares.

And supposing that your sickness were not the sickness of death, and that you should again revive—is it then so great a happiness? You have stepped back from an open grave, in order to return to the same place in a few years. Your earthly dream is prolonged for a moment, and the glory of a better world which is prepared for you,

according to the promise of Jesus Christ, is for a few days delayed. Even on the bed of sickness, do not cease from acting beneficently to your brethren. Do good, even on a sick bed, without ceasing. If you have forgotten to practise the duties of a Christian in your healthy days, correct it while you can. Let not one of your days pass without a Christian-like action. The remembrance of virtuous deeds will cheer your soul in death.

Yet, sick or well, the Christian is at all times ready to exchange the earthly for the eternal. Not that you need continually employ your mind on thoughts of death! No,—it were foolish to destroy with melancholy reflections the happiness which we have received here below from the hand of God. But live as if you would one day depart from this life unexpectedly; prepare your heart for the fulness of joy at that eventful hour. Arrange your domestic affairs so that if sickness or death surprise you, you have fulfilled to those whom you leave behind, all the duties which you owe them.

Set your house in order. Always regulate your business with such foresight and fidelity, that your relations, when they have lost you, may not suffer double loss and double pain. Provide for your family, while you are in health, with tender affection. Think how they would be provided for, if to-day

any melancholy circumstance should suddenly snatch you from them, and they should stand alone in the world to-morrow, with tearful eyes. Hope not that you may have time enough, in a long sickness, to set your house in order. Do you not every week see men disappear in their full vigour? Do you not see others, whom a painful sickness has robbed of the inclination and capacity for all serious business?

But in this the true Christian proves his Christianity; that in all his relations as a citizen of the earth, and of eternity, he is equally well regulated and prepared. He goes on joyfully and collectedly through life—his reckoning for the world and eternity is at all hours ready for its completion.

Oh! so let me be,—so let me become, my God, my Father! The best Christian is the greatest being upon earth. He stands in a happy relation to the past and to the future—in happy contact with them. He is a true hero; for while he thankfully enjoys the pleasures of life, which Thou, O gracious God, hast caused to bloom in his varied path, his spirit dwells already in the plains of Heaven. He is superior to every chance, for none surprises him,—he is superior to every fate, for, sustained by his confidence in Thee, O God, his mind soars above its present scene.

So let me be,—so let me become! From my

death shall men learn to live—from my life shall they learn to die, in peace and joy. So lived, so died my divine teacher, Jesus. He was the truest friend to the sick—their adviser, their consoler. I will also become so, as far as my weak abilities extend.

XXXV.

IMMORTALITY.

MARK xvi. 9—15.

"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it to the residue: neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen."

THE festival of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, who had been crucified and dead, is, in some respects, the festival with which we celebrate on earth the joyful remembrance of our own immortality. His rising from the grave reminds us of that great change which is impending over our own soul. It is not dust like our body—it cannot become dust. Eternally active as are all the powers in the universe created by our Almighty

Creator, our soul also shall remain eternally active. Jesus, our model in life, our example in death, has also foreshown what we have to expect after death.

There are three great objects,—the most sacred concerns of mankind, compared with which all other things are insignificant—three objects to which *the spirit of man* can already rise, but no other known creature of God on earth ;—three objects which form the sanctuary of souls, and without which man would cease to be man. These are—thought on an all-ruling *Deity*—the endeavour to approach nearer to God *through progressive Perfection*—and the hope of *Eternity*.

And whoever preserves these three holy deposits in his heart, he follows the footsteps of the blessed Jesus—he is in the way of salvation ;—from his breast will never depart that peace of God, which is a foretaste of the higher blessedness that awaits us.

If our thoughts on the imperishable nature of our soul, and the infinite goodness of God, were sufficiently alive at all times within us, we should see fewer acts of levity, vanity, and uncharitableness ; we should observe less fear of death.

Therefore will I, to-day, wholly occupy myself with this glorious reflection : “ *There is a God—and I am His work, and for ever incapable of anni-*

hilation." I will reflect on my better destination, on my more sublime existence; and encourage myself with the hope which Jesus Himself has granted me; and which God Himself has revealed, not only in the heart of the Christian, but in the mind of all men who dwell on earth.

I am born for immortality. Christ has promised it to His disciples. The day will come, when I shall no more belong to this world—but to another, wherein I shall attain to a higher or lower degree of blessedness, according as my spirit has already in this earthly life prepared itself for the future one. (JOHN v. 28. 2 COR. v. 10.)

I am called to immortality. This body in which I now walk is taken from the earth: it will again become dust and ashes. But the incorruptible shall not perish. The Holy Scriptures assure me, that my spirit shall enter a new state; and shall be endued with a more noble clothing—shall participate in more noble enjoyments. Our inquiries and speculations are superfluous, as to how these wonderful changes shall be effected. It is folly to wish for a disclosure with regard to the state of the soul after death—that is to say—to wish to penetrate, with human weakness, into the secrets of eternal Omnipotence—with human blindness, into the unfathomable depths of Divine Wisdom. How shall that be made clear to us of which no similitude

is to be found on earth ; and to express which, the powers of language fail us ? Even the apostle Paul repels the fruitless endeavour of the curious inquirer, and uses only dark images to represent that lot which is to be our portion after death. (1 COR. xv. 35—44.)

It is sufficient for the Christian that the tranquilizing assurance has been given—that there awaits us a peculiar life which has been prepared for those that love God, from the beginning of the world. Then “ *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.*” (REV. xxi. 4.)

But a moment before his death Jesus, the Saviour of the world, gave to one of the malefactors, who were crucified with Him, the sweet consolation of immortality. He said to him with a dying voice, “ *To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*”

But God has given the revelation of the eternal and imperishable nature of the human spirit to all mortals. All nations of this terrestrial globe have believed in the continuance of their soul—one people has not received this blessed doctrine from another. The Deity has so regulated the human reason and its laws, that as soon as it is raised to

a certain power, it is compelled of itself to recognize the endless futurity which awaits us.

All religions promise, therefore, this consolation—even the heathen lamented not over the corpse of their dead without turning their moistened eyes towards the regions beyond the grave. This general agreement—this common faith—is *the voice of God*.

How, also, is it possible to conceive the terrible thought of eternal annihilation, when living and dead nature—the whole creation of God—bears witness to *the contrary*? Whatever is once existent in the universe cannot be lost therefrom. The grain of dust which you tread under your feet was once part of a rock—the rock is no more, but its parts are all in existence somewhere. How if the smallest thing have its perpetual duration—changing in the course of ages a thousand times its connexion and actual state—shall the *most noble and excellent* thing with which we are acquainted in this created universe—shall the human soul alone constitute an exception? Whilst the grain of dust will remain in the world as long as the world lasts shall the spirit of man, which alone can think of *God and Eternity*, exist for a bare moment?

There are two things in the kingdom of nature which we are apt to confound; and yet they are every where distinct from each other,—*dead, in-*

animate matter, and certain *occult powers* which connect and animate this rude matter. Those flowers, which your garden produces, spring out of the earth. Water, earth, air, and fire, nourish, indeed, the plant; but a plant will not spring out of every grain of sand, or every ray of light. There exists a secret power, through which the blade of grass and the oak can become even a blade of grass and an oak—and *nothing else*. This mysterious power, which is to be considered, as it were, the soul of the plant, draws towards it the peculiar nourishment requisite for its growth and fruitfulness. Through this invisible, inexplicable agency this flower has become a flower.

How do you suppose now? Is it the dead matter which, by its concretion, produces a peculiar latent power? Or is it the hidden dominion of the power which acts upon the dead matter, and communicates to it, according to the will and appointment of its Creator, various forms, vegetable life, peculiar properties, and a distinctive character? If the dead matter cannot vanish from the world, do you think that the actuating power, *the more noble and better part*, shall pass away? When the plant is deprived of its vital power, is therefore the power which previously existed in it absolutely destroyed? You remark it not; but it continues to operate in other relations.

Thus is also the human spirit a higher, an endless, a wonderful power, with which no other that we know of can be compared. Who, indeed, could be so foolish as to believe that this our body, framed of dust, has first produced the spirit?—that if this corpse shall once again return to ashes, the spirit also would be destroyed? Is it not the spirit which directs it, nourishes it, preserves it from misfortune, animates it, and uses it at pleasure?

Truly, he only can fall into this strange opinion, and make a doubt of immortality, who by his life does not deserve immortality, and has cause to *fear* it. In vain would he deceive himself—in vain would he be the murderer of his own reason! It is loudly urged within him, ‘*Your soul cannot perish*; it will endure and receive judgment. Sinner, sinner! there is a God!—*it is equally true that you are immortal*, and that your works shall follow you into eternity.’

The human soul, that spark of the boundless effulgence of divine light,—the exalted power which rules over plants, and stones, and beasts,—raises itself to heaven, calculates the course of worlds, and through an *inward revelation* is conscious of its own *divine origin*. This spirit, the thoughts of which pass over hills and seas, and approach even unto the throne of the Almighty, is

at all times *something subsisting for itself*. It is only for itself—not for any other being, or as a part of it. It is connected with the rest of the creation only by means of its senses. Around it much is changed : it only remains the same, and observes, and developes its powers. Were the human spirit *not created for itself*—were it only existing for the sake of other things—then would it lose its value, its existence, as soon as the other things of which it was a part had passed away. The spirit is not created for the body—for the dust, which is animated by it—for this its instrument ;—but the body is created for the soul, which is to animate and guide it.

And this remarkable feeling of the independent existence of the spirit—these fine convictions that it is for itself, and no part of other things—is the inward *divine pledge of its immortality*. Thus is also the SUPREME SPIRIT, the Godhead who created us, no part of the universe—no part of any thing existing. He is self-existent—*He is eternal*.

Whoever could doubt of the immortality of his own soul, would doubt—in a moment of dismal self-perplexity, or an attack of phrenzy—of Thine existence, O great everlasting God !

For if we consider the irrational beasts, with their blind instincts, with their various capacities ;

we perceive, that all which their wise Creator has wonderfully imparted to them, is necessary for the preservation of their life, and contributes to the fulfilment of their appointed purpose.

Were the human spirit created only for this passing moment of earthly life—then would it not have needed all those extraordinary endowments with which it is adorned by the hand of God. Had it, like the beasts, received only those blind instincts, it would likewise have been able to support and preserve itself.

But how are we profited by the superior endowments of our spirit? Wherefore are we urged, by a wonderful concatenation of circumstances, to perfect those endowments? Wherefore must we have a knowledge of God, if this God, before whose throne our spirits adore, were not willing to be our *eternal Father*? Why has the hand of God put into our breast the unceasing longing after life and immortality, if the All-merciful did not design to satisfy it? How!—were we not more miserable than the lowest brute, with our high knowledge and intellectual faculties, if the immortality of the soul were only a delusion? The beast knows not death, he lives untroubled about futurity. Why did God, the All-wise, give us an insight into a future world? Shall the sceptic blaspheme God and answer; ‘that we might be on that account the more

unhappy ? Has God manifested His exceeding wisdom in stones, and beasts, and plants—and in men shall it be lost or without an object ? The beasts attain, through their own powers, to as great contentment and perfection, as their nature is capable of—but men reach not, with higher faculties, a thousandth part of the perfection of which they are capable. Thus is our destiny not yet attained and fulfilled in this present life. We bear in us the seed of unlimited perfection ; and thus is infinity added to our nature—or else the world would be a chaos, and the Supreme Wisdom in contradiction to itself—an idea, the absurdity of which would not be short of madness.

If you believe in a God, would you, presumptuous, foolish man, madly deny His existence in the wonderfully constructed, and no less wonderfully regulated universe ? Every star, every blade of grass, your own inward judge, your outward fortune, all the nations of the wide world—would with a thousand tongues exclaim to you : ‘ HE IS, HE IS !’

And if there be a God, and He be the most perfect and most Holy Being,—how dare you doubt His justice ? But whoever believes in no perpetuity of the soul, in no retribution beyond the grave—he believes in an imperfect God—believes that in a

feeling human breast, a higher sense of justice dwells, than with the Most Holy !

For how could it be consistent with Divine Justice, that virtuous men, pious Christians—who for conscience sake, and without deserving affliction, have endured the heaviest adversity on earth—should have been subject to it, unless their misery were to be compensated with higher blessedness ? —that wicked men, the tyrants of the human race, should have passed their days in glory and in pleasure ; should have persecuted their neighbours with impunity, and involved whole families, whole people, in trouble and oppression ? If for this no judge, if for this no recompense were at hand, who on earth would venture to be virtuous ?

It is well said, that virtue is its own reward. Ah ! but not always. How many an one has sacrificed the pleasures of life to virtue, and died amidst grief and tears for his fidelity to the Divine Laws. No ! as little does virtue always obtain its reward on earth, as vice is always punished. But on the patient Christian, as on the shameless sinner, is breathed the warning from another world,—and both perceive it : ‘ *above the stars there dwells the Eternal Rewarder.*’

Yes ; above the stars dwells the eternal Distributor of reward and punishment. Weep no longer,

unfortunate friend of virtue! Despond not, deserted and persecuted innocent! Thy day of triumph will come. Bear courageously thy cross, like Jesus, to the grave! Thou also, like Him, shalt live for ever!

We are immortal! We are not for ever a prey to death. O ye orphan children—why do ye inconsolably lament over the grave of your father, or your mother? O father, O mother, wherefore do ye grieve over the loss of your deceased child? It is gone before to a better world. You are immortal; you shall find it again. God wills it so—it is so ordained in the system of the world. God will call you also to Himself. You will, at some future time, be happy, while others shall yet lament for your loss on earth.

We are immortal! Sinner, wherefore do you grow pale? Immortal is, also, the soul of the unhappy person whom you persecuted with your hatred and evil tongue: immortal is, also, the poor man, to whom you cruelly refused assistance, in order that you might spend your means on luxurious living: immortal, also, is the innocent who was seduced by you, and robbed of the happiness of life: immortal is your neighbour, proud man! whom you trampled under foot, like a worm in the dust.

We are immortal! O Christian, O peaceful fol-

lower of Jesus!—the spirits of those, also, to whom you have done good, are immortal. They shall bear witness of you before God. The tears which you have wiped away from the eyes of the sufferer—they shall contribute to your blessedness. The children whom you have educated for eternity, with pious care—they shall never again be snatched away from you. They are the souls most congenial to your own, both here and there.

We are immortal! O God, my God! ineffably merciful, wise, and just God! In this hope consists my real earthly pleasure. In Thy world is no death, but life alone; and what we call death is but a change. Thy whole universe is full of life. Thou thyself art Life. How is it possible, that I should now exist, and then cease to exist, to Thee? Thou hast not called me into being for this dream on earth. Thou didst make me an heir of immortality; and Jesus, who died for my sins and rose again for my justification, shews me the way thither by His holy doctrines.

He shews me the way through the gate of immortality, to Thee,—to Thee, and to that higher perfection to which Thou hast appointed me, for which I must prepare myself in the school of probation during my earthly life. (COL. iii. 1—4.)

Oh! what indescribable serenity possesses my soul! What transport do the thoughts of eternal

existence kindle in my heart! Ye sufferings of this life—ye hours of sorrow—what are ye? Transient shadows, which leave no trace behind;—warnings of God, to hold fast the sanctifying precepts of Jesus,—warnings of my Heavenly Father, to be attentive to my calling to eternity.

O my God, I will hold fast by Thee. I am, through Thy will, immortal. Let me, under the influence of Thy Holy Spirit, walk worthy of immortality. I will cast away my sins, as contaminating dust. I will be godly, because I am immortal. Full of ardent longing will I aspire to Thee, Eternal Father. Receive, I pray Thee, me and mine into the kingdom of Thy glory. Amen.

XXXVI.

THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS ON EARTH.

JOHN iii. 16.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

IN the night and gloomy darkness of the spiritual world, “the Sun of righteousness” arose :—Jesus THE MESSIAH appeared.

He appeared—so had eternal Providence ordained—in the only *moment* of time,—on the only *spot* on the globe,—among the only *people* in the world, and in the only *coincidence of circumstances*, which could be unexceptionably proper for the great work of the world’s deliverance. Sublime and simple in the direction and controul of nature, God is no less so in the direction and controul of Fate.

The time of the sacred promise was fulfilled. The human race had now arrived at a degree of improvement, which rendered it capable of higher ideas, and of raising the thoughts from earthly to

heavenly things. It is true, that there had lived, in earlier days, individual wise men, capable of the greatest elevation of mind ; but they stood far above the level of their own ages, and were scarcely comprehended by their uncultivated contemporaries. It is true, that there were some few enlightened towns, but they were in the mass of barbarous nations only small spots of light—and these nations were for the most part separated from one another, and without intercourse, except partially in war.

Rome, the all-powerful, must first prepare the way for the Messiah Jesus, and His work. She must first by the force of her arms, favoured by God, subdue half the world, from the Tagus to the Euphrates in Asia—from the Rhone and the Danube to Egypt and the sandy deserts of Africa. She must first have innumerable people united under one dominion and law—and extricate them from their original rudeness : she must first have all internal wars ended, and the peaceable intercourse of nations settled among them ;—by which means the word that Jesus promulgated might be more uninterruptedly and generally diffused.

All national religions at that period fluctuated. The Mosaic law was sunk down to a mere controversy about letters and words, and to an empty ceremonial. Among the Heathen, the more intelligent openly despised the self-constructed system

of the gods. Polytheism every where prevailed;—superstitious sacrifices to propitiate the Supreme Being ;—and the dreadful supposition that at the hour of death the conclusion of all existence, total annihilation, would inevitably take place. More universal than ever was the earnest desire for something better, and for higher illumination. In the wars of hundreds of years, and in the vicissitudes of fortune, both of high and low, the vileness of all earthly things, and the necessity for a happiness which, independent of fortune, should be superior to any external fate, were more distinctly perceived. But who should bring this “ life and immortality to light ?” Who could hear the sighs of the human race?—No one except God Himself.


“ God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (JOHN iii. 16.)

Jesus the Messiah appeared :—in a place, and among a nation, which alone were the most suitable for it. It was only in the land of Judea, among the Jewish people, that there remained a knowledge of the unity of the invisible, living God. Here only was the place where the revelation of a higher destiny could be readily understood and received. Here only were there no idolatrous altars to overthrow, no temples to change,—a change

which must have excited the general anger of the people and their rulers against the religion of Jesus, even from the beginning. Here only was the place where, for thousands of years, from the primitive ages, the doctrine of the Divinity had been preserved, which was implanted in the mind of the oldest of the human race by their Creator. Here was nothing to be altered by a new religion in the constitution of the state, which in other nations was for the most part intimately interwoven with the service of sacrifices and the hierarchy. Hence could Jesus afterwards promulgate His religion as only a higher developement, as a more spiritual application of the Mosaic. He could say to the Jews, with reference to their moral code : *"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."* (MATT. v. 17.)

It was necessary also on other grounds, that the Messiah should appear first in the Jewish nation, notwithstanding that this nation had already become an object of contempt among other people, on account of their unsocial qualities, and their superstitious credulity. Here the general circumstances of the people demanded His first appearance—although at that time no mortal could have an idea of what He would be. But to the eyes of Providence it was unconcealed that this same

people in a few years after the appearance of Jesus, as soon as His doctrine should have taken root, would be destroyed. That this destruction would be not the common fall of a nation, but the entire dissolution and dispersion of the people—the most unusual, the most unheard of fate that has ever befallen any nation before or since. Thus only could and necessarily must the doctrine revealed by Jesus be disseminated immediately, and with wonderful rapidity, through all parts of the world, among different nations—like ripe seed which a storm carries away through the air, and disperses far and wide. For—and this was the decree of Divine Providence which we adoringly recognize in its consequences—the wisdom and revelation which came by Jesus Christ were not to be the confined religion of a land—not merely to stand in the place of the decayed Mosaic system in the Jewish state, but to be the faith and the blessing of the whole human race. Even that contempt which the Heathen felt for the Jews was necessary to the growth of Christianity ; because in the subsequent dispersion of the Israelites into other countries, the Christians were at first taken for mere Jews, towards whose faith much indulgence was shown. Thus the tender plant, the first shoot of Christianity received, in foreign ground, fostering protection from the jealousy of Heathen priests. As soon as the shoot



gained strength, and it was too late to eradicate it ; as soon as the altars and temples of the gods must necessarily fall before it, the priests and princes discovered their original error.

Not among the Greeks—not among the Romans, but among the Jews, must Jesus, the Messiah, first appear—not only for the above-mentioned reasons, but also because here especially in the great mass of the people the faith and expectation of the near advent of the Messiah, a messenger from God, were universally prevalent. Thus was every thing prepared for His reception. Not only the learned, but the common people knew the predictions of the old prophets regarding the Messiah. The predictions which had been uttered centuries ago, and had since been frequently repeated for centuries, —pourtrayed with the most minute particularity, with the most nice descriptions, the character in which the Saviour of the world should appear, and what He should be—how He, a son of David, should come in the deepest humility, as the most despised of men. “ *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots ; and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*” (ISAIAH xi. 1, 2.)

And Jesus, the Messiah, appears. Through the disposal of an all-wise Providence, events concurred, in a most incomprehensible manner, to fulfil in the person and life of Jesus, all the prophetic representations of the ancients. It was He whom high antiquity had so accurately designated, that every one must recognize Him.

He was born at Bethlehem, the native town of king David. He was born of a Virgin called Mary. She was the betrothed of Joseph, a carpenter, and a descendant of the entirely sunken and half-forgotten royal race of David. Time out of mind, the custom had been prevalent in Eastern families, to authenticate and establish the genealogy of their ancestors, clearly and with great care. This custom has maintained itself in the East, even up to this day. The genealogical registers from family to family were nothing unknown. Thus the Evangelist, St. Matthew, (i. 2—16.) laid before his contemporaries the genealogy of Joseph. The mother of Jesus became Joseph's wife.

In Bethlehem, in the city of David itself, must Jesus, by an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, be born. Micah, also, the prophet of antiquity, who lived seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, had said: "*But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come*

forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel ; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."
(MICAH v. 2.)

Joseph and Mary dwelt not in this city of David, but at Nazareth. All these things happened, however, at a period when the whole Roman empire was united for the first time, under the power of an individual, Cæsar Augustus, whose tributary, king Herod, then lived at Jerusalem. Herod had a royal court, royal dignity and power ; yet was he subordinate to Rome. As now Cæsar decreed the first census of his whole empire, and every one was obliged to go to the place of his family to render an account of his property, for its taxation,—Joseph also, accompanied by Mary, journeyed to Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David. (LUKE ii. 4.) Here Mary bare Him of whom the Prophets had spoken. Perhaps the minute circumstances of this event appear to be unimportant to our times ; they were not so in the plan of Providence ; neither for that age, nor for that people. " It was mere incident," it may be said. Well—I will call it so. But of these incidents is our life wonderfully and wisely composed ; and all incidents—never forget, my friends !—are of divine origin.

Yet another, and perhaps to you as unimportant a circumstance, has always astonished me in

the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. Mankind universally awaited, with anxious expectation, the appearance of the Messiah. The report of it had spread wider, than the boundaries of the land of Judæa reached. In consequence of this impression, and by the observation and explanation of the stars, (the favourite employment of the learned in those days, especially in the East,) certain men were led to believe that they must infer from the unusual position of the heavens and from a strange star's becoming visible, the appearance of the Messiah;—and took, in consequence of this persuasion, a journey to see Him. The Scripture calls them "*wise men from the East.*" They came, perhaps, from Chaldea, or Arabia, lying eastward of Jerusalem.

They came to Jerusalem, in the supposition that every one in that city must know of the advent of the long-expected Messiah. They enquired, "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*" For an earthly king was the hope of Israel—a divine hero who should crush the throne of Augustus, and the might of the unconquered Parthian, in order to make the splendour of Jerusalem still more brilliant than it had formerly shone in the days of David. No one in the populous capital could give them an answer,—they were indeed told by every one, that in the books of the Prophets, Bethlehem

was marked out as the birth-place of the Messiah. Thence the Eastern sages proceeded to Bethlehem. Here also every thing was silent. But "*the star which they had seen in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was,*" and they learned that the child had been born of a Galilean virgin. With reverence and awe they repaired to the place where the infant was with its mother. They found it destitute of all dignity, even of the most necessary comforts, in a miserable stable, with a manger for its crib. But their faith was not shaken. They fell down and worshipped Him. They poured out before the Elect of God, the productions of their land or commerce—gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Their enquiries at Jerusalem had excited a sensation in the capital. The whole of the city was disturbed. Herod knew the mutinous spirit of the people which he ruled. He knew the reports of a Messiah. He caused the learned in the Scriptures to be assembled, and asked them where the Messiah was to be born, according to the predictions. The answer was, '*Bethlehem.*' Little, indeed, was required to make a man uneasy and suspicious, who, as a stranger—for he was an Idumæan—had been placed on the insecure throne of Judæa by imperial favour. He might, perhaps, hold the prevalent reports as a tale of superstition; it was,

however, to him a dangerous superstition, on account of the fickleness of the people.

He himself had already been extolled by certain Jews, perhaps only his base flatterers, as the expected Messiah. He knew it ; but he knew also that the majority in the country would not believe in it, and designated his admirers and dependants simply by the name of Herodians.

Under these circumstances he gave sentence for the murder of the Bethlehemish children, in order, that with one stroke he might put an end to all the expectations of the people and all seditious agitations, which might be excited by them. I know well—that besides the sacred writers, no other author of that age makes mention of this horrible deed. But what a weak ground for doubting the thing itself, and for impeaching the unpretending honesty of the Evangelists—and truly from one's own ignorance ! For out of so many acts of violence, as Herod had permitted himself to perpetrate in his tottering greatness, might a sentence of death, such as this, scarcely appear worthy of remark. He had out of mere suspicion, which the statement of some tortured persons had raised in him, caused to be put to death his own two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus. Of what is not a man capable, in whom the passion of ambition has extinguished even the voice of nature ? Besides, the

murder of the Innocents was neither so extensive nor so horrible as it is sometimes represented to us in the delineations of painters and poets. For if even the dreadful decree was executed in all its severity, and so all the children of the male sex, under two years of age in Bethlehem, and as far as the environs of the place reached, were put to death,—still must the amount have been very small, because Bethlehem was one of the least towns in the land of Judæa. Even in our days, it numbers, in all, scarcely three hundred houses, although it is frequented, out of reverence to the birth-place of the Saviour, not only by Jews, Turks, and Arabians, but by very many Christians, who have there a monastery, pursue handicrafts, and carry on a trade, especially in rosaries and crucifixes.

However small might have been the amount of the victims which were slaughtered through the king's decree—yet it remained a disgrace to the life of the tyrant—who himself soon died a dreadful death. It is supposed that he suffered long from dropsy, whence he became putrid whilst alive. Worms were generated in his open wounds, when he was already seventy years old. Besides, he did not accomplish his design. It is true, the people continued quiet; but He who was to have been destroyed remained unhurt. *God watched over Him.*

Mary had, in fact, left Bethlehem with her hus-

band and child, who after eight days was to be circumcised ; and in conformity to the Jewish law, was gone to Jerusalem, that there, together with their offering of two young pigeons, they might present their dear infant in the Temple to the Lord. Still the fame of the Messiah was loudly noised in the city. Still the decree of Herod against Bethlehem had not been issued.


And as the child was held by the mother in the Temple—there entered an aged pious Jew. The old man was marvellously moved at the sight of the child. He—his name was Simeon—had a firm belief, agreeing with the common expectation, that the time was fulfilled ; and that he should not die till he had seen the Lord's Christ, that is, the anointed of God. He saw Jesus. Trembling he takes the child from the arms of His mother to his bosom—looks up with delight to heaven, and speaks in the spirit of the Prophets—“ *Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people ; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.*” (LUKE ii. 29—32.)

The words of the old man excited, after all that had already passed, the wonder of the father and mother. Not less did those of a wise and pious woman, eighty years of age, who, attracted by

Simeon's speech, spoke with similar reverence, prayed, and blessed the child.

The infant had, in obedience to the Mosaic law, received circumcision at Jerusalem. Therefore the parents prepared to go back to their dwelling place, Nazareth, as they had fulfilled what the letter of the law required. But all that had happened must have awakened in them wondering and doubting surmises, as to the destination and future life of the infant. He was to them a sacred pledge of the grace of God. Their whole care and tenderness were bestowed upon Him. How must they have trembled, when it was made known, that the king had commanded the innocents in Bethlehem to be murdered, because the Messiah was born there. Being warned of God in a dream, they set out trembling, and fled to the neighbouring country, Egypt—to the protection of a foreign government, where they lived in secure retirement.

O God, how can I worthily praise Thy Providence! What Divine Wisdom in the arrangement of all circumstances and events, in all times and countries—which were connected with the birth of Him, to whom I owe my spiritual light, my knowledge of Thee, and my salvation! What omnipotence in the great developement of Fate! What mercy and love to that human race, which



was lost in the night of death! Oh! how hast Thou loved the world, to give Thy only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life! Had I ever doubted of Thee—ever doubted of the Divine Mission and Revelation of Jesus—the history of His appearance, and of what preceded and followed it—and how through Thy controul, O God, the greatest event which ever befel the human race, arose out of the smallest and most despised, triumphing over the power of the world—it had crushed my doubts.

Transported with the wonders of Thine infinite grace, like Simeon in the Temple, will I thankfully praise Thee in the course of my life, until Thou shalt let me also, Thy servant, "*depart in peace.*"

XXXVII.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

LUKE xxi. 24.

" They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

HOWEVER various the opinions of our oldest Christian ancestors might be, concerning matters on which a human understanding can least decide with certainty,—yet in this they were all united—to sanctify themselves through the doctrine of their Saviour. They long held together in humility, meekness, and patience. They all considered themselves as one and the same body, animated and guided by one and the same Spirit—the Spirit of Christ. They had only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who was above all, and through all, and in all. Different might be their gifts, their offices, their peculiar ideas of Divine Things : but they had, at last, the same object—to promote holiness and truth, until, as

St. Paul saith, (EPHES. iv. 13.) they all should "*come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.*"

Meanwhile that the Gospel was quickly spreading itself from country to country, from people to people, the time was fulfilled when the Jewish polity should be destroyed, and the capital itself laid waste—as Jesus Christ had foretold.

The event was of the utmost consequence to Christianity. Only a few of those were alive who could boast of having been the immediate companions and disciples of the Saviour of the world, during His ministry on earth. Yet had the remembrance of the great prediction been as well orally and widely propagated, as preserved in the writings of the Evangelists. The fulfilment of the prophecy in so terrible a manner, and the prediction of Jesus there so literally verified, must have raised the faith of those of His immediate followers, who were still living, above all doubt.

At the time of Jesus, the Jews were full of blind and rigid zeal for their religious rites, for their Mosaic ordinances, without in general becoming through their means the better men—but rather exhibiting more selfish malice. They, indeed, frequented the Temple of the Lord assiduously—they fasted according to the precept, prayed diligently—and supposed that by these observances, they

should perform all that was required of them. By bringing their offerings to the altar, through which the priest was enriched, they believed that they had completed their purification from sin. They lived for nothing but their body, for money and dignity, and for the gratification of sensual desires. Each one cared only for himself and his own situation ; and was unmindful of others. All was venal with them. Birth, family, riches, beauty, were prized above knowledge, virtue, and merit. One rank arrogantly separated itself from another. There was no more mutual confidence. Truth and good faith were rare. Even the true patriotic love of their country was wanting ; and its substitute was national pride, or hatred and contempt of other people. They sunk into greater and greater ignorance—they hated those who would have introduced better knowledge and light amongst them—persecuted them as innovators and subverters of their ordinances—adhered so much the more firmly to their blind prejudices ; and imagined not that Judæa, and the people of God, and the holy city, could be overthrown. They were not, indeed, insensible of the subjection to the Roman power under which they lived. But the common distress and danger, far from making them attentive to the one thing needful—the one thing which Christ recommended for their salvation—on the contrary

only separated this selfish people still more from one another. Instead of virtuously esteeming a good conscience and their duty towards God, their fellow-creatures, and their native land, more highly than money or possessions, they were divided into hostile parties of which one constantly betrayed and persecuted another.

Thus it was easy for the Romans to subjugate more and more a people crippled by their ignorance and discord. Judæa, which for some time had enjoyed the appearance of liberty under her own kings, independent of the Romans, was now treated as a mere province—the governors ruled it despotically—they even assumed the custody of the Temple and the right of appointing the High Priest. They harassed the people from year to year, with imposts and taxes. The country was exhausted—they took even the gold from the sacred treasures, and replied to the complaints which were made against the proceeding with arrogance and sneering scorn. Through all this distress of Israel, nothing was changed in the dispositions of the people. The principal men humbled themselves with ignominious baseness before the rulers—transferred, as well as they could, the pressure of public burdens on other classes; and made, by that means, a great part of them beggars. Their stupid self-interest did not calculate, that in the final despair of

the common people, when all should be in want, the turn would come to them; and that in the tumult of the desponding populace, their whole property must fall a sacrifice to the public need.

Already had they shewn a great disposition to rebel. Already had Judas the Galilean, in connexion with Zadoc the Sadducee, once caused an uproar among the people. He had put the sword into their hands, under the pretext, that the law of Moses commanded that they should acknowledge only Jehovah for their Lord, and no human jurisdiction. The vigilance of the Romans, however, soon put down the rebellion. New burdens, new taxes, were the chastising consequences of it.

Thus was dissatisfaction increased. Numberless families were impoverished. Many left their habitations, and became thieves, robbers, and assassins—because, already rendered wild by a neglected education, they had become totally incapable of more honourable feelings. The whole land was at last a theatre of great gangs of robbers; and murder became a profession. All security of life and property was lost. False prophets arose, to improve to their own interest the public perplexity. Here a new Messiah—there a new Messiah—arose to establish again the people of God and the throne of David on the corpses of the Romans! One of these, an Egyptian Jew, brought together an army of

thirty thousand men—placed himself with them on the Mount of Olives before Jerusalem ; and promised the superstitious multitude, in order to persuade them that his mission was from God, that at his command the walls around Jerusalem would fall down before them.

But the governor Felix with his disciplined troops attacked the rapacious rabble ; slew and dispersed them ; and took fearful vengeance for the sedition. It was that period of which our Lord saith : “ *There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders ; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before.* ” (MATT. XXIV. 24, 25.)

The injustice of the Roman Governors and their contempt of Divine and human ordinances, were at length as great as the baseness and discord of the Israelites. For when a people is trampled upon by the insolence of an unjust individual, it is their vices which give power to the tyrant. Whilst the Romans allowed themselves the most shameful acts, the High Priest was seen contending with the lower Priesthood—one party among the people with another. But all feeling resolved itself at last into deadly hatred and revenge towards their oppressors. An universal insurrection of the country took place—the garrisons of the Romans were driven from

the fortified places, and even from Jerusalem. The wild populace wandered about in licentious extravagance, without any plan, thinking only of robbery and vengeance. Menahen, the son of Judas the Galilean, was for a long while the chief leader of the rebels. They fought at first with good fortune against the Roman troops, till Flavius Vespasian, who was afterwards Cæsar, arrived with a superior army—entirely subdued Galilee; and at length encamped against Jerusalem.

At this time the distress was great. But a people without virtue is a people without power. The old party-spirit of the Jews did not decrease under the threats of the most frightful dangers from without. One party in the besieged city hated and persecuted another. The rabble plundered the rich, and murdered the wise. The greatest enormities took place. It appeared as if every one cared less whether his native land should be delivered, than whether he were the most powerful among his fellow-partizans, or could become so. Affairs were no longer regarded, but persons only.

Then came the moment of which Jesus had warned His disciples: “*When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let*

not them that are in the countries enter therein."

The followers of Jesus remembered His words. They had, in a body, at the beginning of the siege, left the city, and betaken themselves to Pella, a Cælo-Syrian town, situated in the half-tribe of Manasseh. Here they formed for themselves a new community, and awaited, with fear and trembling, the event of things.

The Roman general, Vespasian, skilfully took advantage of the party spirit and divisions of the Jews in Jerusalem. He designedly protracted the war against them for several years. He expected that a people destitute of virtue and discipline would consume themselves with their dissensions, and prepare themselves for destruction. He attained his object. When he was elected Cæsar, and committed the army to his son Titus, Israel was, like a fruit which falls from the tree, ripe for destruction. Titus begirt Jerusalem more closely. The miseries of the siege increased—but also the madness of the implacable parties against each other within the city. Nevertheless, the people defended themselves with great fury. The benevolent Titus had pity on the beautiful, ancient, and famous city. Willingly would he have made peace; but the obstinate Jews rejected all proposals: whilst their misery, through the inhuman enormities of their parties towards each other, was unspeak-

able. After the Roman general saw that every hope of peace was vain, he attacked the city in earnest. The citadel of Antonia was stormed; the Jews withdrew, fighting from street to street, towards the Temple. The Temple was stormed, and, more through the carelessness and fury of the Jews than through the vengeance of the conqueror, became a prey to the flames. Still fighting, they fell back beaten to their upper town. This also was stormed; and now the whole of Jerusalem was a heap of rubbish and ashes. Above a million of Jews were put to death in this war of nearly five years. The dreadful prophetic word of Jesus was fulfilled: "*There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*" (LUKE xxi. 23, 24.)

Seventy-nine thousand Jews, who were taken prisoners, were carried away into other countries, and sold for slaves in the public markets, like fattened beasts. Jerusalem, which had, in early ages, been five times subdued by enemies, was, in the seventieth year after the birth of Christ, entirely destroyed, so that not one stone was left upon another—a vast and mournful heap! Those poor

Jewish families which still remained in the land, were treated like slaves, and were obliged to pay, without hesitation, the heaviest tributes for the melancholy privilege of being allowed to inhabit the wilderness-ground of their forefathers. The Roman veterans shared the deserted possessions, and dwelt at Emmaus and Nazareth.

However humane the Roman Emperors might afterwards show themselves towards the Jews, yet these preserved, even in their dispersion, their senseless hatred of other nations. They considered themselves, even under ignominy which had befallen no other race, as the chosen people of Jehovah,—stirred up seditions here and there,—and rendered magistrates and nations their inveterate enemies. Even in Judæa, when their numbers increased again in time of peace,—when a great many of their people had again settled upon the hill of the ashes of Jerusalem,—they raised, nearly seventy years after the first public misfortune, another general insurrection. A new Messiah arose, of the name of Barchochebas, who drove the weak Roman garrison out of their fortified places. But the Romans returned with greater force. The whole of Judæa became a desert. Nearly six hundred thousand Jews were put to the sword. Whoever remained alive was dragged away into captivity. Jerusalem was for ever annihilated. The

curse of fate seemed to have fallen on its ground. The heathens had built, hard by, for themselves, out of the ruins of the former place, a town called *Ælia Capitolina*. This, in succeeding centuries, took the name of Jerusalem, without being the real Jerusalem, or on the site of the former city. Entrance into it was forbidden to the Jews on pain of death. Not till later times was it allowed them only once in the year to approach the holy city, to sing their mournful songs. The new town continued to be inhabited by the heathens for four hundred years. It then became the prey of the Arabs and Turks. On the hill, where formerly the famous temple of Jehovah stood, a temple of Mahomed now raised itself.

The Jews, carried away prisoners among all people, remained the same in this mournful and ignominious dispersion—as malicious, selfish, mutinous, full of prejudices and superstitions, as they were in the time of the Saviour of the world. Once they cried: “*His blood be on us, and on our children!*” Ah! terribly was the curse fulfilled. They found that the invisible kingdom of God, established by that Jesus Christ whom their fathers had crucified on Golgotha, was spread over the whole world. This was that kingdom of the Messiah which was foretold by the prophets. But they continued obstinate in unbelief, in their

contempt of other nations and religions. The greater the pressure was under which they groaned, the greater was their attachment to the Mosaic law, not only to the written, but also to the oral law—that is, to those superstitious inventions of the priests, which, as explanations of the old or foundations of the new law, were transmitted from mouth to mouth. This oral law was afterwards compiled in writing, and, under the name of the Talmud, was a means in the hands of the Rabbins, of making the people submissive and dependant; and, in the general ignorance, of maintaining their own authority. This hard yoke of the spirit did not a little contribute to make the Jews obstinately persist in their superstitious opinions, hopes, and separation from other people. It contributed to perpetuate their hatred and pride towards all who were not Jews—and make them reckon it no sin to overreach, to betray, and to defraud those who were not their brethren:—it occasioned them every where, and always on the same account, to draw down on themselves fresh ill-treatment and persecution. Persians and Arabians, Egyptians and Romans, Turks and Christians, were all alike filled with abhorrence of men, so obdurate, spiritually feeble, and obstinate in their senseless and national vices. And since the destruction of Jerusalem, even to our own times, no century has passed, few countries

are excepted, in which the posterity of Israel has not been visited with the dagger and bow-string—with burning piles of wood, with dungeons, the rack, and the most dreadful torments. Often has their bare name been deemed a mortal crime to their infant children. Often have they had no resting-place, and been obliged to live like the wild beasts, in woods and solitudes. No where esteemed—at most tolerated out of compassion—neither their property nor their life has been long secure.

They always believed that they had reached the deepest abyss of their misery—a deeper always presented itself, into which they were obliged to plunge. Malicious fortune smiled at them in many a year of peace—in order to visit the deluded people still more cruelly with fire and sword, and frost and hunger. Like beggars, they dragged on their miserable life, in fear and trembling, from nation to nation—from one part of the world to another—not to find a home, but only an asylum. Their eyes turned in vain to the former land of their fathers. For them there was no Judæa, no Jerusalem, no city of Zion—no Temple on the Holy Hill! They kissed, with hereditary meanness, the dust of the feet of nations, which were despised by them in their hearts, and who yet gave them a refuge. They were again trampled on by these nations, as soon as through usury and deceit they

had amassed possessions. Their mere existence was thought a burden to the people—their mere sigh, the crime of rebellion deserving punishment. In all their misery their continual increase, which in other cases is esteemed an honour and a blessing, was only to them a greater curse, and made the pressure of their suffering more extensive. As formerly they had thrust away from them, with inveterate hatred, the professors and disciples of the religion of Jesus Christ, so were they and all their descendants persecuted, with shuddering dislike, by the whole Christian world—especially in times of rudeness and ignorance. For Christians long believed, that the millions of Jews dispersed on earth had incurred their dreadful fate, not so much through the stiff-necked adherence to their superstitious prejudice and internal corruption, as through the crimes of their ancestors, committed against the life of Christ.

The Jews, indeed, suffered for a long while indescribable misery, in consequence of this persuasion, and through the religious hatred of Christians—but yet longer have the Hebrews provoked ill-will, and contempt, and expulsion, through their own guilt, through their superstitious religious pride, diligently nourished by stupidly proud Rabbins—through their uncleanness, notwithstanding all their prescribed washings, through their usury

and cheating, which they considered allowable towards Christians, and often even as praiseworthy.

Only in later times, when the barbarism of Christian nations gave way, and as these became more enlightened and Christian-like, the long-harassed followers of Moses obtained a more tolerable lot—especially when they advanced with the rest of mankind, in the intelligence and enlightenment of the age ; and cast off the folly, the superstition, the hateful and bigoted spirit of their Rabbins. Wise magistrates at length perceived that the religious rage of Christians, and the perpetual slavery in which the Israelites were held, had not less contributed to the corruption of the people, than the law of Moses disfigured by their Rabbins. Property was also given to them,—the rights and freedom of citizens : they were benevolently withdrawn from thievish usury to more worthy occupations ; and virtuous men were found even among the Jews, who effected the better instruction of their fellow-believers. And thus Israel, after nearly two thousand years' distress, may hope again to be extricated from her state of degradation, and again to enjoy the rights of humanity with other men.

Never will it look again on the throne of David—never on its Zion, “ *un'til the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled ;*” but as a very ancient religious sect, it will find toleration, peace, and country.

A fearfully great and wonderful example, O Eternal God, my Father, the Father of all nations, the Father of all worlds, hast Thou given in the history of the race of men, in the posterity of Abraham—how the curse follows on the heels of the sins of the heart, and how the corruption of a people is the forerunner of inevitable destruction ! Terrible art Thou in thy judgments, O God ! But *Thou* dost not punish ;—men punish themselves. Transgression of Thy holy ordinances is self-destruction, and vice a self-infliction. Whoever departs from virtue, flees from happiness and condemns himself.

Thou dost not condemn the guiltless !—Therefore I will not venture to condemn this unhappy people whom, dispersed over the whole earth, Thou dost appear to have pointed out as a warning example to other nations. I will not condemn them—I will not hate them, but love them, and endeavour to alleviate their sufferings. Thou regardest not persons, but in all nations he is accepted who feareth Thee, and worketh righteousness. And thus, be he Jew or Christian, whoever loves virtue, whoever bears an honest and pious heart in his breast, he is my friend. Do not many of the Jews, moreover, in the present day, esteem—the more they advance in wisdom and in godliness—the wisdom and the godly character of

that Jesus so long mistaken by them ? We will now go on in concord, in the perfecting of the spirit, and improvement of the mind, until we all *come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the SON OF GOD.*

XXXVIII.

THE PERSECUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 13.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

IN the days in which the Temple of Jehovah and the City of Zion were reduced to ashes, and the walls of Jerusalem fell in ruins to the ground, the kingdom of God sprung up and flourished, not only in the whole Roman Empire, but also among nations which were not yet subjected to the sceptre of the Cæsars. This was the event, then future, which Jesus had predicted with regard to Himself and His disciples. In His earthly nature, He departed from the world—spiritually, He returned again to it,—that is, to all nations—with the power of His Word and in the glory of His Gospel. "*And then shall they see,*" He had said in the sublime language of the Prophets, "*the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. So likewise ye, when ye see these things*" (namely, the destruction of Jerusalem) "*come to pass, know*

ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and Earth (the Temple and the kingdom of Judah) *“ shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.”* (LUKE xxi. 27. 30—33.)

How could it be otherwise? What unprejudiced person could see the fulfilment of the prediction of Jesus without astonishment? Who could have refused to revere Him, and to adore the Majesty of God exhibited in Him? The Jews might refuse to accept the new doctrine, and to abandon the Mosaic law—the Heathen might decline to renounce the gods of their fathers;—no one, however, on investigation of the newly promulgated faith, could resist its excellence. From it alone were to be derived higher knowledge, eternal truth, enduring happiness. The Jews as well as the Heathen could not but allow, that this religion alone was in perfect unison with the purest convictions of reason—with the ordinances of nature—with the perpetual aspirations of the human mind after higher things;—they could not but acknowledge, that through this religion the great riddle of human existence on earth, and of its connexion with God and futurity, was first solved;—they could not, in fact, but admit, that not only each individual, not only one family or a people, but the

whole human race, would be brought to the highest degree of perfection, and the most firmly grounded happiness, if the holy doctrine of the Saviour guided the will of man.

Whoever attentively regarded the primitive Christians was convinced of the admirable effects of the Faith of Jesus. He saw men of every age, of every rank, masters and servants, learned and unlearned, soldiers and work-people—all actuated by the peaceful spirit of love—beneficent, philanthropic, disinterested, incorruptibly honest. Their virtuous conduct was without ostentation. They were not, like other mortals, bent solely on the obtaining of fame, and power, and money. They were not immoderately attached to the comforts of life, or its external advantages. They appeared to have been transformed by their new faith into beings of a higher kind—which entirely free from artificial wants, entirely independent of present circumstances, maintained a happiness in the inner chambers of their hearts, which was unknown to other mortals. One saw them not only fulfil their duty at all times with conscientiousness, in strict obedience to the law of the land,—but do more for the good of others than might reasonably have been expected of them. The soldier lost not, in the tumult of battle, the tender feelings of humanity—the necessitous had yet always a bit of bread

remaining to give to him who was still poorer than himself. The merchant rejected too large a profit—and whatever a man might do that was deserving of admiration, no one could or would ascribe it as a merit to himself—rather did each appear discontented that he had not performed more. One saw a fraternal unanimity prevailing every where:—whatever difference there might be in opinion, their hearts remained inseparably united. One saw them always cheerful—even in the heaviest calamity;—one recognized them by their friendly mien, by the quiet dignity of their external appearance—the imperturbable tranquillity which reigned in their hearts. With calmness they received the gifts of fortune;—with godly joy, for a just and holy cause, they met the danger and penalty of death.

Such conduct moved the observer, and must have impressed him with love for a religion which had worked so wonderfully in his fellow-mortals. Thus proceeded the blessed Gospel, rapidly, from heart to heart. The converted Roman soldier communicated his faith to his comrades in war;—and the troops of the Imperial Legion were accustomed to march from one end of Europe to the other. Christian merchants, when they went on their business to distant continents and islands, bore their holy convictions to regions, where never before had a single ray of Roman or Greek know-

ledge penetrated. Thus was the light of Divine Truth imperceptibly diffused among the nations; and after a few centuries, millions were sufficiently matured in the Faith to declare themselves openly and loudly for Jesus Christ..

But the Christian communities, likewise, were themselves in great and unceasing activity to spread abroad the Word of God. It is in the nature of man to wish to publish and communicate to others his happy experience and convictions. Who could have been willing to conceal those truths, which were so incontestibly shedding illumination over all the earthly and super-earthly parts of the universe? Who could have been willing to enjoy alone a happiness, which surpassed all pleasures derived from transitory things? Every member of a community was, in his sphere of action, a messenger of the Gospel, and a herald of the crucified Redeemer. But many imitated the example of the Apostles, and journeyed into heathen countries—there to establish new communities of believers.

Those wonderful gifts of the Holy Ghost, the operation of which, among the earliest followers of Jesus, was so much renowned, were, probably, soon entirely lost. In the meanwhile, they became the less requisite—because the number of Christians was already great, and the prophecies of Jesus were seen to be fulfilled in the

wreck of Jerusalem ;—because many learned and virtuous men began to undertake both orally and in writing the triumphant defence of religion against the attacks of Jewish and Heathen scoffers. The power of conferring the gifts of miracles and prophecy entirely vanished with the last of the apostles. Still the efficacy of Divine Providence continued wonderfully and visibly to work in the increasing of the kingdom of God, and the enlightening of the spiritual world. The biography of the Divine Saviour, composed by the four Evangelists, and the letters of the Apostles, were diligently read and copied—communicated from one Church to another, translated and explained. They became now the sources of sacred knowledge and the firm supports of faith. Every thing co-operated, on all sides, to transplant the Gospel from one end of the known world to the other.

But nothing worked more successfully in different countries than the lofty piety of Christians in testimony of the truth—that heroism with which St. Paul says : “ *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.*” (PHIL. iv. 13.) For though it indeed happened that princes and magistrates remained for a long while indifferent, or only tolerant, towards the increasing multitude of Christians—there were not wanting others who saw with vexation the progress of the new doctrine and the

increasing contempt of their gods. Custom and superstition asserted their rights ;—if a misfortune befel a country, it was regarded as the effect of the anger of the idols, whose temples were deserted by more and more persons continually converted to the new faith in an invisible God. The priests, exasperated at losing their offerings at the sacrificial altars, and their credit with the people, cried out loudly against the unheard of conduct of those who were called Christians. They were clamorous at the downfall of their religion ; and called the Christians despisers of the gods, because they refused to bend the knee before wooden idols and stone deities. Hence it came about, that the statesmen, who were alarmed at the growing weakness and danger of the Roman Empire, thought that they discovered one principal cause of the evident decline, in the fact that so many men out of all ranks had abandoned the faith and reverence of those gods, under whose worship Rome had become great—and that they had dedicated themselves to a religion, which instead of inculcating the patriotism and warlike virtues of old times, taught only the love of an unseen God, placability, and magnanimous forbearance even towards enemies—as well as the abhorrence of revenge and hatred. They complained, that since men began to believe in the immortality of their souls, they

would care less for the unperishing celebrity of their name, through which the Roman of former ages was inspired to praiseworthy undertakings. They threatened, that in case the temples and altars were suffered to decay, the subversion of the Roman authority and dominion would inevitably follow.

By these and similar speeches which were current among the people, first contempt, and then hatred of the Christians, were aroused. Ignorance of their doctrines and opinions produced many unfavourable misinterpretations of them, and gave the calumniators a wide field. It was sometimes said that the worship of a God who was no where visible, was the worship of a phantom. At others, when they heard of the Lord's Supper among Christians, and how they commenced with the words of the Founder, it was said, that they were accustomed in their private religious assemblies actually to eat the flesh and drink the blood of men. The rude and credulous people received the report with horror. A slight occasion was sufficient to give vent to their wrath and malice against the Christians.

And thus arose those dreadful persecutions of Christians in the first centuries, of which so much has been written and said. The confessors of Jesus were soon, in different places, exiled, plunged into

misery, stoned, crucified, burnt, slaughtered, hanged, and spitted. Now were they murdered in execution of judicial sentences and imperial decrees—and then in risings of the people.

Notwithstanding, it is yet certain, that the like persecutions of Christianity extended themselves but very rarely at the same time over the whole Roman empire, comprehending as it did, three quarters of the globe. Far oftener did they take place through the commotions of an excited, superstitious, and plunder-loving populace ; or through the exasperated priests, who observed with grief the abandonment of their temples and altars ; or through the barbarous caprice or revenge of an individual governor. Persecutions took place, from these causes, frequently, and in many countries ; but neither in the number, nor to the horrible extent, in which they have since been described with eloquent exaggeration. It is true that ten principal persecutions have always been spoken of, as among those which the Christians suffered ; but the historical testimonies of that period by no means confirm their amount ; and it is not improbable that the ten horns or kings, of which the book of Revelation (xxvii. 12.) makes mention—as well, perhaps, as the remarkable ten plagues of Egypt, contributed to the adoption of this particular number. For, as among Christians in later

times, vain glory was sometimes substituted for praiseworthy deeds ; it was thought allowable, without hesitation, to make the number of the martyrs greater than it was — because it was supposed that such exaggeration might excite the lukewarm Christians to an imitation of the honourable spirit of their venerable ancestors, who sacrificed every thing for the sake of Christ.

That a human monster, such as the emperor Nero was, whose inclination to cruelty might be the breaking out of a real mental disorder—whom it would please much more to be hated than beloved—who could behold with rapture the flames of Rome, and murder his benefactors, his instructors, and his mother,—that a monster of this kind should give orders for the most unjust and horrible persecution of Christians, was perfectly consistent with his atrocious disposition. And it is very pardonable in the communities of Christians of the first centuries, as the effect of their fears, if they long held the erroneous opinion amongst them that he was the Antichrist—the beast in the Revelations, only appearing for the first time, and not destroyed ; but reserved in order to return. Even so to a suspicious and blood-thirsty crowned reprobate like Domitian, it must create a shudder to know, that there were men under heaven to whom virtue and truth were sacred. He detested the professors

of Christianity. How could he do otherwise, who, immersed in unnatural pleasures, committed the most shocking cruelties? The mere thought of their virtues and unsubdued courage made him tremble,—he shed the blood of Christians in streams,—he wished to extirpate them from the earth. And grounds of palliation for his crimes were not wanting. Where is there a powerful sinner, who, ruled by his passions, cannot find an excuse for the most reckless injustice that he commits? Yet others have trodden in the footsteps of these inhuman wretches, often less out of inclination to extreme dissoluteness, than from principles of false selfish policy. But whatever might be fatal to the Christians, they remained unshaken. Their going to judgment and to death was their passage to glorification and blessedness. It is, perhaps, not altogether to be denied, that Christians drew upon themselves, through want of prudence, the jealousy and ill treatment of the heathen,—when they held their religious assemblies at night, in remote houses, in caves and woods, and thereby raised suspicion that they were engaged in political conspiracies,—or when they refused certain tokens of respect for the emperors, which they conscientiously believed ought not to be paid to any mortal,—or when they withheld obedience from the civil magistrate in things which were at variance with their religious

feelings,—or when, by the daring destruction of a Pagan altar, or the overturning of a Pagan idol, they incurred the wrath of an affronted populace. Yet were their motives for such steps always honourable. Even when, under the continual persecutions, the former pious inspiration degenerated into real fanaticism, which, not content with the common, loved the extravagant,—when they themselves went and dared the death of martyrdom,—when, instead of trembling before judges, they derided them,—when they encouraged their executioners to redouble and exhaust their torments, in order that, for the sake of God, they might endure the greatest sufferings. This wild enthusiasm, though pernicious in itself, was not the less worthy of respect in consideration of its source. It is, indeed, too much to expect of human nature to preserve a peaceful calmness, when unheard of oppression and force have raised all the feelings to the highest pitch. Blame it whoever can—that the steadfast professors of Christianity in those days of terror could not persist in silent endurance when they were defamed and martyred for the most holy cause. Defiance awakened defiance,—and where the enemy thought to have excited fear and terror, it was a matter of rejoicing rather to oppose, on the other hand, a prouder spirit than perhaps was necessary. It was the boast of every one to dare

to say with Paul : "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*"

It is ever one of the most false and inappropriate measures to use force and compulsive means against prevailing opinions and predominant convictions. History confirms the fact—that imprudent rulers by so doing always defeated their own object, and gave to the opinions hated by them, a support in the might and power of enthusiasm which conquered and gained every thing. This has, time out of mind, been the case not only in religious, but also in civil affairs. How can it be otherwise, with the defence of the most sacred interests of mankind against the malice of superstition, rudeness, or selfish policy ?

The quiet inspiration of the persecuted Christians which now changed into fanaticism, made, for the first time, Christianity to triumph. It was considered as the highest fortune—as the most becoming departure from life, to be a witness unto blood of Divine Truth. Long was the remembrance of those who had gained the crown of martyrdom honoured in prayers, and songs, and writings ; on the other hand, they who yielded to the Heathen, or had denied Jesus Christ, met with long-continued scorn. The Heathen saw with wonder the cheerfulness of the believers in torments, and at the hour of death—no Heathen could die thus *for his*

faith. They saw that the innocent, the noble-minded, the most respected, and the wisest persons, were put to death without being guilty of any offence. This must have brought many an one to compassionate seriousness—many an one to meditation—many an one to inquiry what Christianity really was. But the inquiry was at once sufficient of itself to alter the whole mind of men. The wisdom of Jesus—the truth of His doctrine—the excellence of the virtues recommended by Him, seized on the judgment of the inquirer. He was proud and glad to become a confessor of the long-expected Light of the world.

After the rage of the Jews, at Golgotha, had murdered the Divine Friend of man—there remained at Jerusalem above a hundred of His followers, determined to resign their life for His holy faith. After a hundred Christians had died for the sake of this doctrine, a thousand preached the truth in their stead. When a thousand were slain, a million of believers were numbered in the Church.

It is easily comprehended that in times and countries like ours, when the Christianity of the heart has too much become a mere Christianity of the tongue—so high an inspiration as that of the pious martyrs cannot be estimated in its full desert and greatness. It is to be comprehended, that people who yet imagine themselves to be disciples of

Jesus, but out of pride, or vanity, or pleasure, or convenience, more than once a day neglect their most sacred duty—and thus neglect Jesus Christ himself—should be amazed at the courage of the martyrs. It is to be understood, that some people should find it incredible—people who, for the sake of making the smallest profit, or for a trifling consideration, or out of ill-will towards this or that person, dare to take unjust measures, and to set aside all religious feeling. To the coward all bravery is incredible—to the wicked all virtue is enthusiasm or hypocrisy.

But you, ye noble Sacrifices—ye conscientious, pious sufferers for truth—ye Martyrs to my holy faith, you shall ever be revered and beloved by me. Your ashes are long ago consumed; but ye still live in eternity, and in the remembrance of God. If I cannot endure like you, may I live with courage like you;—as guiltless and without blame before God and man. I have no rack, no torture, no burning piles to fear for the sake of Jesus. Mine is, by the grace of God, the happier lot to dwell under enlightened magistrates and wise laws. But when I suffer any kind of evil for right, for truth, for virtue, is it not to suffer for the sake of Jesus?

And when men sneer and mock at my sense of true Christianity in words and deeds, is not

that sickness of my heart a sweet pain, such as you once, illustrious Martyrs, felt with transport ?

Faithful to my Saviour, I will be, like you, courageous through life—cheerful in danger—steadfast in trial. “ *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me !* ”

XXXIX.

THE FIRST CHURCHES.

1 CORINTHIANS xiv. 40.

“ Let all things be done decently and in order.”

WHEN Jesus Christ instructed His disciples, however great the number of His hearers might be, there was not yet any particular place of assembly for them. Sometimes the Messiah taught in the Temple at Jerusalem—sometimes in the courts of it—and at others in the open fields. He instituted, however, *outward signs* of communion and discipleship,—seals of the Covenant of Grace—because He knew the worth of sensible means in awakening the mind to pious thoughts:—these signs are Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. But the *inward token* by which His followers were to be known, was LOVE. “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*” And so also thought St. Paul. As Christ placed Charity, or Love, above all outward privileges, so did the Apostle ; for he thus writes of it to the

Corinthians; "*But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*" (1 COR. xii. 31.)

This was much otherwise in later times. The inward signs of discipleship were forgotten—men rested on the outward. They quarrelled, hated, accused one another of heresy; but sufficiently observed external rites and customs. They did that for which Christ had blamed the Pharisaic Jews:—their inner man was corrupt, their outer only regarded.

Long were Baptism and the Lord's Supper the only principal ceremonies among Christians. But Baptism, at the time of Christ, and for the first century after Him, was not administered *chiefly*, as now, to unconscious children or little infants; but to adult converts, who were obliged to be previously instructed in the fundamental principles of Christianity. To the simple, plain spirit of the oldest Christians, it appeared unnatural to admit any one, who was capable of knowledge and belief, into the communion of a Faith, or the fellowship of a society, of which they knew nothing. With respect to such persons, they adhered rigidly to the words: "*Whosoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.*" They conceived that Faith was to precede the act of Baptism; though the Faith of the master of a family was often admitted as security

for that of all his household, who were baptized in consequence of his conversion.

Whoever was not baptized, was not considered a member of the society of Christians. He could frequent their assemblies, in which he would meet with instruction and prayer ; but he remained shut out from the Holy Supper—for that was, indeed, a solemnity intended only for the initiated and more perfect professors of the Saviour.

These Suppers were at first hospitable feasts, in remembrance of the crucified Redeemer, at which Christians, rich and poor, assembled ; and, laying aside all civil distinctions, ate together as brothers and sisters. Where in a society a community of possessions still existed, the charges of the meal were borne by the common stock. Where such was not the custom, it was the duty of the rich to prepare the meal, and to share it with the poor :—or each brought his own food with him. Thus did they eat and drink with one another, and then at the end of the repast, the breaking of the bread, as Jesus had broken it,—in remembrance of Him, and of their own holy communion with Him—was celebrated with great solemnity. Notwithstanding the regulations, it might now and then happen that some irregularities took place—it might occur that unworthy conduct crept in, which entirely contradicted the idea of love, and the solemnity of the

moment. St. Paul, indeed, blames this among the Corinthians. He desires, that the Lord's Supper should not be degraded into a common meal, but be received in the spirit of a holy ordinance. He therefore advised, that they should previously eat to satisfy themselves at home. "*What ? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in ? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not ? What shall I say to you ? shall I praise you in this ? I praise you not.*" (1 COR. xi. 22.)

In order to prevent the abuses to which such public suppers were liable, it came to pass, indeed, that the eating together in common was by degrees set aside ; and that only the breaking and distribution of the bread, and the dispensing of the wine to the communicants present, according to the precise words of Christ's institution, were eventually retained.

Baptism, also, was doubtless, at first, in many instances, though certainly not in all, administered, not by sprinkling only with the water, but as a real washing—an immersion of the person to be initiated—to signify that as the body is purified by water from all uncleanness, so must his whole mind be now cleansed, through the Spirit and Doctrine of Jesus, from all impurity and sin. In the times of the Apostles, little difficulty was made, with regard to the administration of Baptism. To

many it was given, before they yet knew the whole extent of the duties which they took upon themselves, in consequence of becoming the followers of Jesus. It was enough if they only at first believed that Jesus was the promised Christ, or Messiah. This belief necessarily led them to follow the example of the Lord, and to keep His commandments. Instruction in these matters was continued after Baptism; and when it was at length completed, they added a new ceremony for the ratification or confirmation of the Baptismal vows. In some places they anointed those who were thus confirmed, with consecrated oil—in others they anointed the disciple at the time of Baptism. In general, the usages and pious ceremonies were very different in the different communities. Some adopted more external form—others less—as necessary for exciting devotion. One imitated what was found useful or becoming in another. General directions were not known. For external ceremonies were not yet considered as of the chief importance, and the Church was not yet the mistress of Religion, but the servant and instrument.

The Apostles, also, ascribed no particular importance to those externals. They said with St. Paul: “*Let all things be done decently and in order.*” (1 Cor. xiv. 40.) It was indifferent to them what ceremonies were combined with Bap-

tism—whether it was received in houses, or in rivers and lakes—or over the graves of those who died for the sake of the Doctrine of Jesus. The universal reverence for martyrs and confessors had, as it appears, early introduced in some places a custom of admitting the Neophytes into the communion of Faith by Baptism over the corpses of heroes, who had gone joyfully to death for the witness of that Faith. Thus were associated with the view of a grave during baptism, thoughts of the resurrection, immortality, and happiness to be attained through Christ. St. Paul says therefore to the Corinthians: “*What shall they do, which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?*”

As with these ceremonies, so was it with public worship. Every community remained at liberty to regulate itself, according to its own option, in a proper and consistent manner.

The Apostles satisfied themselves here also with the general principle: “*Let all things be done decently and in order.*” At first, so long as Jerusalem was not destroyed, the Christians frequented the Temple of that place, and the Jewish schools, like other Jews. At the same time they formed themselves into particular assemblies, in which they might refresh themselves with instruction and prayer. But as the Jews thrust from them

all adherents of Jesus, deeming them enemies of the state, and apostates from the Mosaic law;—as, on the other hand also, the Heathen were converted to Christianity, and in truth far more of them than of the Jews—the Christians began of necessity to form a peculiar society of the faithful—one separated as well from Jews as Heathens. Then arose that which was called a Church.

When a sufficient connexion of members of the community, or distinct religious society, was established, it was needful to attend to some prescribed order. Then were introduced, under apostolical sanction, besides the Christian usages and the sacred profession, ecclesiastical laws and ordinances of Church discipline. These regulations slowly developed themselves as circumstances rendered them necessary. “*Let all things be done decently and in order!*” This the Apostle urged, as a principal matter, on his converts, in the rich and pomp-loving town of Corinth. It would happen, without doubt, that opulent persons among the Christians, who brought the splendour of their houses and the magnificence of their clothes into the assemblies of public worship, might thereby disturb the general devotion. It was esteemed decent at that time that the woman should wear long hair, but the man the hair cut short—that the woman should have the head covered, but the man his head bare.

St. Paul very earnestly presses compliance with this decent custom : “ *For this cause ought the woman to have power* (probably the name of a head-dress in those days,) *on her head because of the angels,*” (or messengers perhaps of the heathen, who crept into the Christian congregations for insidious purposes.) (1 COR. xi. 10.) Likewise in his first epistle to Timothy (ii. 9) he recommends propriety and simplicity of dress to the women : “ *In like manner that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety ; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.*” In several communities not only the men taught, but the women also spoke in the assembly. St. Paul explains his objections to this practice (1 TIM. ii. 11, 12.) which was opposed to the quiet modesty of the woman, and might well lead to many abuses and scandals.

Thus did a peculiar discipline and order imperceptibly become established in the holy assemblies of Christians. As Christianity in its origin sprung out of Judaism, so the converted Jews brought with them many of the regulations of their public worship into the Christian congregations. And subsequently the congregations converted from heathenism adopted a great part of the ceremonies of the Jewish Christians—partly because the teachers themselves were mostly Jews—partly because the

communities in Jerusalem or Pella, or in other countries of Asia, had the authority of higher antiquity for them.

Hence we must not wonder if in the first Christian century the Jewish sabbath was always held and celebrated, as well as the Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day. The observance of the Jewish day of rest was first omitted in the western churches—because here the converts were chiefly heathens. Even so the regular fasts used by the Jews were continued in the religious customs of the newly-converted communities. Neither Christ nor the Apostles had introduced or enjoined periodical or formal fasting; but it was observed by the Jews in consequence of their obedience to the Mosaic law. For similar reasons the use of the Easter Lamb was retained by Christians; for in accordance with Jewish customs, Christ had eaten it with his disciples. The laying on of hands was an ancient usage in Israel; and the converted Jews retained it. As in the Temple at Jerusalem, and in the Jewish synagogues—the services of public worship were prescribed also in the assemblies of Christians. They read here, as there, passages out of the Old Testament—afterwards also out of the Gospels and apostolical epistles—explained and interpreted them. They sung the holy psalms of Israel—they prayed individually or in common.

They celebrated the same seasons as the ancient Jews did, especially the Passover (or Easter)—but now with other and higher recollections. It was no longer the memorial of the deliverance of the Hebrews out of Egypt, but the devotional commemoration of the resurrection of Christ ; and even in the Paschal Lamb there was an allusion to the death of the Saviour, who, like a sacrificial lamb, was offered for the sins of the whole world. Whitsuntide, as well as Easter, was a pure Christian festival. How sacred and precious to all believers must that day be on which, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the disciples of Jesus for the first time went forth publicly to announce Christ crucified to all people ! Easter and Whitsuntide appear to have been the first festivals of the Christian churches, and for a long time continued to be the only or the principal feast days.

Simple as were the usages, festivals, and assemblies for public worship of the first Christians, so the offices of the Church communities were not less so. In the beginning the gifts which each individual possessed, appeared to consecrate him to his vocation. God had thus, as it were, determined who should enjoy the principal rank among Christians. *“ And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of*

healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."
(1 Cor. xii. 28.)

The Apostles in general had no particular community over which they especially presided. They belonged to all. They were accompanied by their assistants in constant journies, either to establish new societies through the conversion of the Jews and Heathens—or to visit the old ones, and strengthen them in the faith. But in the several communities they imitated the Jewish regulations. They had overseers (Bishops) and elders (Presbyters) of the congregation. These were at first scarcely distinguished, in name, from one another. Both were teachers of the congregation—superintendants of it and arbiters of disputes. With displeasure was it observed by the Apostles, that Christians went to law with one another before the judgment-seats of the Heathen. Forbearance and love from all to all were, and continue to be, principal laws and principal doctrines of Christianity.

But no secular power was on this account allowed to the bishops or presbyters. They were and remained in this respect as the other brethren. They were elected from the assembled congregation—for every Christian, as a member of the community, had a share in the management of the Church, and in the assemblies when they held a council. Every one was competent to be appointed

to perform ecclesiastical offices, and all classes did perform them.

Among the Heathen the priests had no peculiar rank. They were citizens like other men. They could pass without impediment from one profession to another. Not so with the Jews. Here the priests and Levites, according to the Mosaic Law, constituted a rank entirely separate from the civil orders. From the earliest times the form of the Jewish priesthood was introduced into the societies of Christians, and according to the oriental custom, the spiritual was distinguished from the secular, the priest from the layman. This arrangement amongst the Jewish Christians was also approved of by the Heathen Christians; and it is, perhaps, especially to be ascribed to the influence of these latter that the priestly office did not become hereditary, as it had been made by Divine Appointment among the Jews.

Virtue and knowledge alone were long the boast of the Christian teacher. He often exercised, besides his spiritual functions, the civil trade by which he had earned his livelihood before he entered the community of the Faithful, or was named to his Bishop and Elder. But when his sacred labours increased, it was considered right that the community should support him, and provide for the necessities which he had no longer time to

supply by his work. This mode of accepting support was never disapproved by the Apostles, and was even recommended by Jesus. First, in later days, arose out of the voluntary charitable contributions of the faithful, a fixed salary for the Bishops, and Elders, and Deacons,—in later days, a difference was made in the stipend, when the Bishops began to be more separated from the Presbyters and Deacons, and to be of more temporal consequence than they. But it was very natural that in the progressive increase of Christian communities the number of ministers, as well as their duties, should become greater. In aid of the elders, there were appointed deacons, sub-deacons, readers, and other assistants in the duties of their calling. The multitude of these persons, so employed, produced the expediency of having one superintendence over them. And the individual who exercised this, soon received exclusively the name of Bishop or overseer—a title before given indiscriminately with that of Presbyter.

The bishops and priests had great influence in the communities, through their peculiar situation, as examples of pious conversation—as teachers in the assemblies for public worship—as instructors of the faithful—and as mediators in quarrels among them. Such influence they by degrees still more extended. This happened especially in con-

sequence of the circumstance, that full authority was here and there given them to cut off transgressors by a summary proceeding, from the communion of the faithful ; and again to restore them after proof of their repentance, and change of disposition. Such an use of spiritual authority being imitated in many communities, it became a more general practice, and the exercise of it was at length considered an indefeasible right.

Thus arose out of the necessities of individual Christian communities, little noticed by the heathens, the ordering and discipline of churches, of public worship, and of sacred offices. One may indeed say *churches*, for among the first Christians there was little unity or similarity, either in their system, or in customs, festivals, and usages. Every society held these as they seemed most agreeable to the conscience. And the Apostle's precept, "*Let all things be done decently and in order,*" was faithfully followed by each community, according to its own circumstances. It was only required that the Bishops and teachers should be, in their lives and conduct, examples to the whole body of believers—not proud and puffed up with their office, but humble, the servants of all, temperate, chaste, frugal, moral, hospitable, and apt to teach. (1 TIM. iii. 1—7.) The Priests as well as Bishops were

married, were good fathers of families, and *faithful* citizens of the state.

It is true, that in those times, when the name of Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews as well as to the Heathen—when the believer enjoyed no security of life and property—marriage was scarcely prudent, especially in the teachers, against whom the storm of persecution was always first directed; or in those who devoted themselves to the promulgating of the Faith in other countries. Therefore, indeed, St. Paul, without accounting marriage a sin, warns the oppressed Christians of Corinth in these words: “*I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God; one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry.*” (1 COR. vii. 7—9.)

Such was the ecclesiastical life of the first Christians—simple, unadorned, and innocent. As the age of childhood is usually the most amiable, so was also the youth of the Christian Churches the most beautiful and the most holy. Their struggle with persecution strengthened their faith, and the power of their virtue. The externals were few—the internal and spiritual obligations far more. Con-

cealed places of prayer, solitary huts, gloomy woods, or unfrequented caves, long supplied the place of a temple. But these temples were rendered glorious by magnanimous vows of steadfast virtue, by fervent devotion, by tears of love, by submission to God's will.

How different are the times become ! Not the times—but the hearts in the times ! O God, let me walk, even at this day, with the old deep sense of piety exhibited by the first disciples of Jesus Christ ; that I may be more worthy of thy grace and mercy ! Amen.

XL.

THE WORLD AND SOLITUDE.

MATTHEW vi. 24.

"No man can serve two masters ; for either he will hate the one and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

ALAS! it has become too much a practice in the Christian world to make Religion a mere affair of the understanding—of curiosity and research. The soul-elevating and strengthening faith of Jesus has been changed into a kind of religious philosophy, which remains totally unfruitful, so far as respects the serious cultivation of the mind, and the acquirement of holy inclinations. Thence arise misunderstandings, unsound judgments, controversies and disputes, and secondary considerations regarding mere words and terms.

These discords existed in the first ages of Christianity, and were a subject of great vexation to many people. Persuaded that it is not worldly learning and sophistical differences of opinion, but child-like faith, pious dispositions, holy actions,

which are the essentials of religion—they drew back, in grief, from all participation in the existing contests, and followed the bent of their own wills. They recognized only the great principle enforced by their Divine Master—that of *Love*. They listened only to His exhortation : “ *Whoever will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*” And they preferred following Him, rather than the zealous, but contending, expounders and divines. They well remembered what Christ had once made a primary condition of salvation with the rich youth,—whom He advised to sell his estates, and divide them among the poor; and then to follow Him. They well remembered His solemn declaration : “ *No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*” (MATT. vi. 24.) And by this they did steadfastly abide. Contempt of the world and indifference to earthly things appeared to them the first proof of a true and determined love of Jesus Christ—the first decisive step towards a spiritual union with their God. They sold their property, divided it amongst the poor, and entirely separated themselves from all intercourse with mankind,—whilst they fled into the silent wilderness, in order to devote themselves to the service of the Lord.

The constant persecutions which threatened or befel those who dared to confess the name of Christ, were, indeed, calculated to make them more indifferent to living in the business of the world, and to render absolute retirement more pleasing to them. In the first centuries after the birth of Christ, Christian hermits were found in remote wildernesses, who there spent their whole life in painful privations, and in prayer and fasting.

Surely, I have a right to think, that these pious people carried their resolutions too far. For such a kind of renunciation of the world has our Redeemer never required from His followers,—nor ever taught,—nor ever practised Himself, or suffered to be practised either by His Apostles or by others of His first disciples. He withdrew not from the bustle of the world, but remained in intercourse with men, both good and bad. None of His precepts went so far as this—that we should fast and pray and torment ourselves, in continual solitude. He enjoyed the innocent pleasures of life, and encouraged His friends to do so ; although His enemies blasphemed Him on that account, and said : “ *Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners !* ” In the same manner His disciples after Him encourage us to “ *rejoice with them that do rejoice.* ” This alone was His holy will in regard to all such matters :

‘Incline not thy heart to that which is earthly—but to that which passeth not away. Seek not intemperately the good things of this world—riches, honours, and other temporal advantages. Let your treasure be in heaven!’ We must, then, enjoy the pleasures of life only as refreshments by the way—only by the way as we pass along. And what is given by God, the Giver of every good and every perfect gift, we must esteem and use as a means by which we may so much the more effectually accomplish His righteous will ; it is the talent entrusted to us, which we must turn to account for the happiness of our fellow-creatures. We must thus live unto God with the earthly things which God bestows upon us. But he who wishes to live entirely for the earthly, and also at the same time entirely for the heavenly, desires to do that which is impossible. We cannot *serve* two masters. We “*cannot serve God and Mammon.*”

The pious hermits in the first ages of Christianity, took these words, manifestly, in too strong a sense. They thought that they could not go too far in the mortification of their flesh and its desires. With all the gifts which their Heavenly Father had bestowed upon them for the benefit of their fellow-creatures, they were unprofitable : they buried, like the indolent servant in the parable, the talent committed to them in the earth. They treated their


body with a cruelty, which often injured it. If this were a life *truly pleasing to God*, then would it be expected of every mortal. But if every man, separating himself from others, should flee into the wilderness, what a melancholy state of things would thence arise on the face of the earth, entirely contrary to the Divine arrangements, and the ends obviously proposed in the laws of nature! All mankind would live more apart than the beasts of the forest, and would gradually grow wild like them;—nay, the human race would necessarily perish; and this world, created by God to be the dwelling-place of rational beings, would be nothing but an endless wilderness and pasture for innumerable cattle.

Mistaken, however, as were several among the first Christians in their exposition of the words of Jesus, still I cannot blame their flight into the desert, or denounce it as a sin. For many, tired of their frequent persecutions and constant insecurity among the Heathen, retreated into unfrequented regions, to preserve their lives,—and there undisturbed, far from the altars of the infidels, to worship the living God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth. But many, through their peculiar frame of mind, were wrought up, I might almost say, to a suicidal piety. This was always the case with persons who were endowed with a particularly ardent ima-

gination and lively feelings, or an inclination to low spirits and silence. We know, from both long and late experience, that man in hot regions has also warmer blood, warmer imagination, warmer feelings, than in cold climates. In the temperate or frigid zones, the most considerate frame of mind generally prevails ; whereas the vivacity of feeling and imagination will be greatly subordinate and inferior to the intellectual power. Hence it was, we may observe, that in old times the hermits were found to be far more plentiful in warm climates than in colder ones ; and that in later times the cloisters have not maintained themselves so long in cold and temperate climates as in warmer.

The first Christian hermits, indeed, were seen in Eastern countries and in Egypt—whereas in cold and temperate climes the hermit's life arose from imitation.

But we must not suppose, that this inclination to solitude, denial of the world, self-torment, and enthusiastic desire of spiritual union with God, have existed only in the Christian Church. No :—The Christian Religion did not introduce this state of mind—it subsisted previously—and this it was, which modelled religion to its own shape and purpose. There were then—and there are in the present day—in other religions, persons who wished to distinguish themselves by retirement from



mankind, by self-punishment, fasting, praying, and abstinence from every comfort of life ; and who strove thus to attain a higher degree of sanctity. Nay—even among Heathen people the like has been often seen ; and always in warm countries, where the heated imagination is most capable of producing such effects. Among the Jews, the Essenes distinguished themselves in a similar manner, by living, like John the Baptist, an austere life. Among the Indians, Persians, and other nations of the warm parts of Asia, even among the Turks, are found numberless pious inhabitants of the wilderness, and hermits, who spend their whole life in voluntary poverty and continence, in renunciation of the world, in cruel chastisement and martyrdom of the body, in prayer, fasting, and devotional exercises before their idols. Even in our own times, travellers have related to us examples of the most dreadful self-inflctions and abstinence among this kind of devotees, whom they have seen in tropical eastern lands.

There have been, therefore, at all times, and almost in every religion, people, whose glowing imagination and fervent feelings supplanted the peaceful reflection of the understanding—who felt a disgust at mere dry knowledge and information—who held an inactive contemplation and consecration of oneself to God to be the most excellent

fruits of faith,—and who imagined that they were possessed of an inward enlightenment, which must proceed from a near union with God. In order to perfect this union, they thought that it was necessary to divest themselves, in every possible way, of earthly wants—nay, indeed, that they were obliged to misuse the body, in order that the spirit might so much the more freely triumph.

When in later ages also the Christian Church was divided into great parties, and some of those parties rejected the life of the hermit and the cloister as useless—still they could not prevent this disposition from continuing, even without the hermit's cell or cloister. Thence were sects again formed in the Protestant Churches, which, by a secluded life, charitable conduct, frequent prayers, fasts, and devotional exercises of various kinds, hoped to be able to sanctify themselves, and to enter into close connexion with their Creator and Redeemer;—who even boasted of inward light, revelations, earthly intimacies with the world of spirits, prophecies, and other pretended miraculous operations of the Deity. To them, at one time, every thing was full of mystery—at another, every mystery was unveiled. They first imagined themselves more ignorant than they really were; but afterwards more informed than our Heavenly Father has thought good to permit any man to be.

Certain sects of the Protestant and Evangelical Churches are, under another form, what the pious inhabitants of cloisters in the Roman and Greek Churches are ; and these are again what the Egyptian hermits and Jewish Essenes were ; what are now the fakirs and monks of the Mahommedans, the gylongs of the idolatrous Tibet people, and various hermits in other Eastern nations—who all strive after higher degrees of piety than their fellow men, though in different forms and ways. For I do not say that the Heathen hermit is to be considered as like the Jewish one, at the time of Jesus—or the Turkish like the Christian monk. But still, in all, the source of their inclination to the mysterious and extraordinary is ever the same, namely—the preponderance which the power of imagination and feeling has over the sober judgment of the understanding.


If this strong propensity to the wonderful, and to the belief of an inward revelation, act more upon the whole mind and the power of the will—then arises out of it the inclination to an extravagant contempt of the world. But if such a propensity act more upon the understanding of a man, so that the latter is subjugated by it, whilst it is endeavouring to search out and prove every thing—then arises the inclination to find every passage in the Holy Scripture full of mysterious meaning and

higher reference,—the inclination to revere and explain even casual occurrences or mere ceremonies in an exaggerated manner,—the inclination to take every thing emblematically—in every thing to perceive types of future persons and events, and always to speak in uncommon half-intelligible images.

When persons of deep feeling and glowing imaginations, will and act, hate and love, it is always done with excessive fervour ; thus is it, as well in religious as in social life. The foundation of this lies in the preponderance of their inferior powers of mind in comparison with the higher, that is, in comparison with reason and understanding. Their religion becomes, by this means, entirely symbolical and sensible ; like as in children religious representations are usually more symbolical and sensible than in grown up persons, whose judgment is more mature. Even the persons, therefore, who think themselves nearest to the spiritual kingdom, and fancy that they can so entirely spiritualize themselves as to enter into union with God, are commonly most ruled and deceived by their sensible nature, namely—feeling and imagination. Their prayer has more of the senses in it—their hopes of eternity, their faith, their love to God and Jesus Christ, have more of the senses. Far from exhibiting that pure spiritual veneration and worship

of God, which are distinct and exempt from every thing of sense, they act towards the sublime object of their love with all the manifestations of an earthly tenderness ;—they make or decorate images to His honour with pious trifling ;—they speak of Him with sweet and endearing epithets, which remind us more of what is common upon earth than of any thing celestial. Nay, it is not unheard of, that such a supposed religious love has degenerated into real fanaticism or madness, uniting the wild emotions of a suppressed carnal instinct with an imagined holy inspiration. Into what errors does not such a kind of devotion lead men !

But however melancholy these aberrations may be ; and however much it is to be wished, that men were able to avoid even the less hurtful deviations of this kind of religion, there is little hope of it. Bare instruction is seldom or never of use, because it is addressed to an understanding which has been long overruled by the imagination and feelings. Here one can only hope the best from time, from care of the bodily health (the condition of which has so great an influence over the higher sensibilities)—and from Divine controul. Those who fall into religious exaggerations and enthusiastic fancies, sometimes fail less from any error of the understanding or from bad will—(nay this is often very noble)—than from a false proportion in



the developement of their mental powers. They are, without knowing it, or wishing to think it, really sick in mind. It is only by early virtue that we can effectually obviate such an evil, as soon as we perceive that there is an inclination to it, and that it is likely to get the upper hand.

Most powerfully does the ungovernable force of the feelings and fancy display itself in the age of youth, at the transition from childhood to maturity. Here it is, where very serious precautions must be taken, against the superiority of such a power, for the preservation and government of reason. But if disappointed wishes, misfortunes, and sufferings of any kind interpose, which draw the lively mind closer to religion—then may the inclination to solitude, to renunciation of the world, to mysterious union with God, grow stronger from year to year, and by daily exercise become an incurable disease. Even at a later age may bodily weakness and irritability, excited by unexpected sufferings, produce the same effects, if a man be not very well practised in making himself master of his own feelings.

In the first centuries of the Christian Church, one beheld the pious worshippers separated from all the world and living in the wilderness, with veneration and respect. For, with holy convictions, and without any earthly consideration, they had

parted from mankind, in consequence of being overpowered by the vivacity of their feelings. The difficult sacrifice which, with truly pious intention, they offered to God, touches me with admiration. I honour their virtues—their courageous self-conquest. They acted as they ought. In the peculiar condition of their mind they *could not do otherwise*.—How ill would it become me to load with reproaches those who, almost without imagination, and with little irritability, judge of every thing coldly and drily, and are scarcely capable of a warm participation in any thing,—scarcely of a fine emotion,—scarcely of a tear of pity! They too *cannot well do otherwise*; for they are not able to divest themselves of their own natural disposition. They wish to act only on principle; to calculate every thing—to prove every thing with the understanding.—Why should I blame those, then, whose mind, without their assistance, is more delicate and lively?—Honour every one for the good which he has and does, according to the natural gifts which he has received from God.

Thus acted the first Christians. To them the pious worshippers in the desert appeared to be better and holier men than those who lived in the tumult of the world. They treated them with greater distinction and respect: perhaps they fancied them in intimate connexion with God;—consi-

dered them as favourites of Heaven—nay, as wonder-workers;—and long after their death mentioned their names with pious admiration.

Their example excited many devout men to imitate them, without being led by any internal impulse of their own. So much the more meritorious did a severe renunciation of the world appear to them. Others did the same from less pure motives. The desire of distinction and thirst for fame instigated them to retire into solitude, and to seek respect as holy persons. Now the number of hermits increased;—then they dwelt in many cells together;—then they prescribed to themselves severe rules of conduct and devotional exercise. And thus gradually the cloister-life took its rise among Christians; and the idea became prevalent, that denial of the world in consecrated solitude, with the practice of devotion and mortification of the flesh, was of all human acts the most pleasing to God. Far from men and the temptations to sin, which occur in society, they thought best to preserve their innocence and sanctity, in order that they might more certainly obtain the mercy and love of God.

The Holy Scripture says: ‘Avoid the lusts of the flesh’—shun sensual thoughts and desires—deny yourself and the world—that is, for the sake of Divine things, for the sake of virtue, regard as

trifling all the joys and pains of life. He who will gratify his ambition, his avarice, his lust, his envy, and his hatred—he serves not God. ‘*Ye cannot serve God and Mammon!*’ Yet no where is it commanded to avoid mankind, to bury oneself in solitude, and to cease to be useful by counsel and deed to our fellow-creatures. No; rather let your light shine before men; improve, for the benefit of mankind, the talent which God has committed to your care;—what you wish that men should do unto you, that do first to them.

And so will I, as Jesus Christ, as all His disciples did, remain in intercourse with mankind,—enjoy with gratitude the gifts of God,—do good to all according to my abilities,—and not stand in inactive devotion, far from the spot where I can and should afford assistance. As God so loved the world that He gave for it His only begotten Son—so will I also love the world! not that which is only earthly in the world, but that which is holy and divine therein—not the dust, but the spirit—not the animal desires, but the virtue which is well-pleasing to God. *Thus shall I serve God alone, and not Mammon!*

THE END.









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